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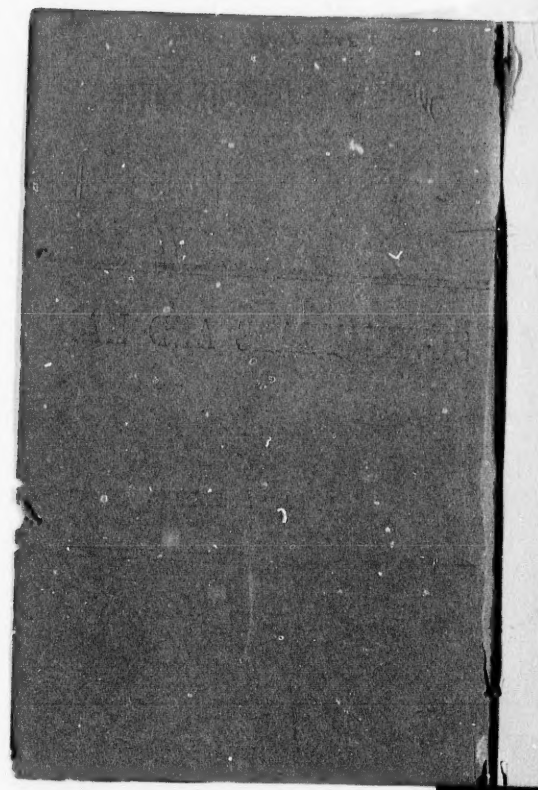
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SEVEN YEARS AND MAIR.

BY
ANNA T. SADLER.



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SEVEN YEARS AND MAIR.

CHAPTER I.

"Him didst thou cradle on the dizzy steep
Where round his head the volley'd lightnings flung,
And the loud winds that round his pillow rung
Woo'd the stern infant to the arms of sleep;
Or on thy highest peak
Seated the fearless boy, and bade him look
Where, far below, the weather-beaten skiff
On the gulf bottom of the ocean strook."

H. KIRKE WHITE.

THE Island of Foula is the most northerly of that group familiarly known as the Shetlands. Its bold, rocky shore stretches out for some distance into the sea, and rises to a great height above the level of the water. The island is not an attractive spot; far to the inland it is rugged and sandy, interspersed here and there with sparse clusters of mountain-ash and elm and birch. The buildings are, for the most part, low

and rambling, some of them dating back for centuries. Many years ago the oldest was, however, a manorial dwelling, inhabited by a family claiming their descent in the direct line from Ospak, the Viking, who married an Irish wife, and settled down in a rude abode, which had since been enlarged and improved according to the needs or tastes of successive descendants.

The worthy proprietor, who had fallen heir to the traditional honors of the family, as well as to the square, substantial building we have mentioned, resembled his Norse ancestors in little but the name, which had been handed down, an unstained legacy, from father to son. The old man could tell a good story and sing a good song, and drink his glass of punch like any leal old Scottish gentleman who had fought in the wars of the Pretender, and still raised his hat and drank his toasts to the memory of good King James. But the Norse blood had not passed entirely out of the family. Ospak had a son, who was one day to inherit the rather empty title of "Udaller," and enter into possession of the manor and adjacent lands. Eric was physically a worthy descendant of the white-haired race who had conquered the island and established them-

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selves there as masters. He was tall and straight, strong and lithe of limb, fair-haired and blue-eyed, with a certain air of command which seemed natural to him. He was a good oarsman and a keen sportsman. He rode the most fiery horse with the easiest grace imaginable, and managed a boat on the stormiest sea with the confidence of an old mariner. He was handsome—handsome, his old nurse said, as Olaf Kyrre, whose beauty had passed into tradition, and strong and brave as Ospak the Mighty, who landed with the first Lochlanns on that rocky shore.

On the island Eric was a sort of ruler; none questioned his right to a supreme authority, which the proud, impetuous boy never abused. He ruled over the simple islanders with a gentle, generous sway that won their hearts, while the strong dash of the fiery Norse blood commanded their obedience. And so his youth was passed, the spoiled darling of his parents, the idol and ruler of the fishermen whose days were spent out upon the restless ocean. He was full of romance; it was part of his life; it had come to him by inheritance; it had been fostered by circumstances. He passed most of his time down among the rocks, or out in his little boat.

One evening the weather was cloudy and damp. The sky showed here and there a sprinkling of blue through its dulness; the sea had caught an unpromising grayness from its sister-element; the wind was blowing in short, sharp little gales, setting the fishing-boats at anchor out upon the water rocking and dancing. It blew the sand in curious eddies up and down among the rocks, and stirred the short, scant grass that covered the shore to the edge of the cliff.

Eric was standing with one firm foot upon the level rock, and the other resting upon a higher point of the cliff; the wind was making free with his hair, tossing it into the most becoming disorder, till he resolutely pulled down the cap that was resting carelessly on the back of his head; he wore a coarse fishing-suit, and a silk handkerchief loosely knotted around his neck. He was looking down into the water with a sort of intensity, and seemed to watch anxiously the movements of a little boat that was making its way with some difficulty to the shore. Once reached there, the young fisherman, who was its sole occupant, leaped lightly out, made it fast, and turned to ascend the cliff.

"Eyvind," cried Eric, "you are late. I

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have been watching for your coming. The sea is rough."

"Rough and wild," answered the lad, with a peculiar solemnity not out of keeping with his appearance, "and there will be many a wreck before the dawn."

"Away with such gloomy thoughts, Eyvind!" said Eric. "Your voice is enough to make one shiver."

Eyvind turned toward the sea, and said no more; both looked anxiously out upon the main. The blue had faded utterly out of the sky, the clouds had taken shape, and were settling, heavy and lowering, to the north-west. Gleams of pale light showed from beneath their dark masses, casting a lurid brightness on the water; the wind was blowing up fresh and brisk; the sea moaned ominously; the rocks seemed grayer and drearier than ever, and Eric turned away with a little movement of impatience. Eyvind still gazed and gazed, seeming to take a strange delight in the gloom of the coming storm. In appearance he was a striking contrast to Eric. He was pale and swarthy; his long hair was straight and coarse as that of an Indian; his eyes were black, and had a certain weird solemnity of expression.

Truth to tell, few of the islanders would have stood in Eric's place at such an hour and in such a spot with Eyvind of the hut. Strange things were whispered of the lad. He dwelt in a lonely hut, in the bleakest and dreariest corner of the island, where the wild waves on stormy nights rose within a short distance of the door, and wailed with almost human passion, in tones of human rage and despair. His only companion was his mother, a half-crazed creature, feared by the more ignorant as a witch, and by the better informed on account of her infirmity. She never left the hut, nor was seen by any one. She was dark and small, with something of the same swarthy color as her son, and a most forbidding cast of countenance. She kept the house with scrupulous neatness, and, except when the wild moods were on her, provided the frugal fare for her son and herself. When the fit was on her, she sat on a low hassock by the fire, and muttered to herself in a foreign tongue, or crooned old ballads that had been sung perhaps in her youth at some distant fireside. Her coming to the island, too, was somewhat mysterious. She had been saved from a wreck, clutching an infant in her arms. Whether she had lost her reason from the

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fright occasioned by the shipwreck, or had previously become demented from some other cause, none could tell. The people at first sought to coax her away from the hut whither she had been brought on the night of her arrival, but their persuasions were of no avail: there she remained. They cared for the child till he became of an age to care for himself. Then they abandoned both child and mother. In course of time the hut was shunned as an accursed spot, its inmates regarded as having connection with beings of another world, and the child called Eyvind, in memory of the mighty sorcerer who once, according to the Norwegian annals, had been a power and a terror on the earth.

Eric alone, despising the popular superstition, and pitying the objects of it, had formed a strange friendship with the lonely boy, became the link that bound him to civilized beings, and gave him some sympathy with his fellow-men. Together they studied; together they fished and hunted; together the greater portion of their days were spent; and together, not unfrequently, they passed the long winter evenings by the cheerful hearth of the Udaller. Hence did Eyvind become, in great measure, superior in mental acquirements, as well as in man-

ners and appearance, to the rude fishermen, who feared and despised him; hence, too, was Eric's exceeding popularity gradually diminished by his close intimacy with so singular a being. These evenings by the Udaller's fireside were bright spots in Eyvind's existence; sometimes they were spent in reading and studying, but just as often in listening to the old legends and quaint Norse lore, of which Eric's mother possessed an inexhaustible fund. This mother was the embodiment of all Eric's ideas of the good and beautiful; from her he had inherited his passionate admiration for the fair and lovely in nature, his love of the ideal, and the poetry and romance that lay so deep in his nature.

As the young men stood still a moment, gazing at the ocean darkened with fore-shadowings of the coming storm, Eric laid his hand kindly on Eyvind's shoulder.

"Come home with me, Eyvind," he said; "it will be dismal enough at the hut to-night."

"Nay," said Eyvind, gloomily, "the storm is coming on; my mother will be bad; I dare not leave her."

"Then I must go," said Eric. "Keep up your heart; and at dawn to-morrow, if the

to the rude fishermen, loved him; hence, too, his popularity gradually increased. These evenings by the bright spots in Eyvind's eyes, but just as often legends and quaint tales. This mother was all Eric's ideas of the world from her he had inherited admiration for the fair and his love of the ideal, a chance that lay so deep

stood still a moment, darkened with foreboding storm, Eric laid his head on Eyvind's shoulder.

"Come, Eyvind," he said; "enough at the hut to-

and, gloomily, "the storm is bad; I dare

said Eric. "Keep up your courage to-morrow, if the

weather be fair, we will get out the boat, and try our luck at fishing. Good-night."

"Good-night," answered Eyvind, turning again to the shore, as Eric pursued his buoyant way homeward, and hummed a snatch of an old Norse song. Eyvind did not linger long upon the cliff. Slowly and thoughtfully he went toward his home, along the rocks, foam-whitened, and beside the angry sea. As he approached, flashes of lightning were already darting across the hut, showing it distinctly through the growing darkness. A gleam of firelight came out from the open door. It was the only sign of comfort or of a human presence that the place afforded. As Eyvind entered, his mother was sitting on a low stool staring into the fire, and muttering drearily to herself. She took no notice of his entrance, and did not raise her head, till a violent gust of wind shook the hut. Then, with a cry of terror, she sprang to her feet.

"Le vent," she cried, "le vent, le tempête! Ça me fait peur, ça me fait peur!"

Eyvind understood not a word, but he knew that the wind and the sound of the waves disturbed her.

"It is only the wind," he said, soothingly, "and the sea moaning among the rocks."

She rushed over and peered into his face; then, pushing him away with a loud laugh, sang,

"Quelle est la charme de la vie,
C'est l'amour, c'est l'amour, c'est l'amour."

Changing suddenly, she sang, in a plaintive voice:

"O belle riviere,
O charmaute asle,
O douce campagne,
O pays tranquille
Loin de vous, O cher Loire!
Ma vie est."

She ended with a low moan; then resumed her seat, and relapsed into a gloomy silence. All at once she rose, and throwing herself at Eyvind's feet, seemed as if imploring him. She spoke, rapidly and vehemently, in her native French; she gesticulated violently; she tore her hair; she sobbed, till, as if in despair, she sank, moaning, on the floor.

Meanwhile the storm had burst; the wind shook the hut with such fury that it threatened to hurl it from the cliff; the sea dashed, howling, against the rocks, and with a wild roar the waves rushed back vanquished, only to be succeeded by other and more

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powerful ones. The lightning flashed its red glare into the very centre of the hut, and was followed by peal on peal of vibrating thunder. Toward midnight the storm abated, and as the elements grew calm, so, too, did the woman's troubled thoughts. At last she fell into a deep, quiet sleep, and Eyvind, raising her gently, laid her upon the couch. When he saw that her sleep was likely to last, he went to the door, and looked out upon the night. The clouds were dispersed, and the stars were peeping out here and there, then hastily hiding under a cloud, as if still half afraid of the warring elements. The waves, too, no longer stirred to madness by the storm, beat against the shore with a sullen murmur as of half-forgotten resentment, and the wind had carried its clarion note of defiance far over the main. Eyvind remained there only a moment, and, closing the door, retired to rest.

In Foula neither bolts nor bars were required; and had both been necessary on every other dwelling, no one would have dreamed of approaching the deserted hut, or the haunted cliff on which it stood. Eyvind threw himself carelessly on his couch, with his great-coat only for covering. The bed was hard, the pillow of straw, yet the

smouldering fire on the earth was soon casting its dying light on his sleeping face; it made ghostly shadows on the wall, too, mingling with the fishing-tackle and the nets, but unheeded and undisturbed, the spell of slumber had fallen on the hut, and its inmates were happy. One, at least, was far over the ocean, on the sunny banks of the Loire. Life had been cruel to her, but the spirit at least was free; and sleep, like a truce from God, brought a respite, during which it escaped from its prison-house.

Meantime Eric, coming in from the chill dusk of the evening, met with a cheery welcome. The fire beamed out its warm greeting; the supper-table stood ready, and the viands were being brought in hot and savory. His father nodded good-humoredly, and his mother, from her chair beside the hearth, smiled a welcome. She was a handsome and stately dame, proud of her descent from the white-haired race that had landed long ago with Olaf on the Irish coast. She was fair and tall, like Eric, and held herself straight and erect, though her summer-time of middle age was past. Her husband was a ruddy-complexioned, hard-featured man, with a world of good-humor shining out from under his shaggy brows, and playing

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Her husband was
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around his expansive mouth. A worthy,
good-natured soul he was, beloved by his
tenants and neighbors, content with him-
self and with the world around him.

"My boy," said the mother, "it is a cheer-
less evening. Come over to the hearth, and
catch a little of this pleasant heat. You
must be chilled."

"If I were, mother," he said, fondly, "there
is warmth enough in your smile to restore
me."

"That boy knows the soft spot in the
feminine nature, and no mistake, good wife,"
said the Udaller, chuckling over his joke;
"he is a born flatterer."

"The wind is high to-night," said the
mother, still smiling. "Did all the boats
come in?"

"Yes, mother; Eyvind's was the last, and
I am late because I waited to see it anch-
ored."

"You have strange tastes, my son," said
the mother, more gravely; "and strangest
of all is your fondness for that singular be-
ing."

"You do not object," said Eric, earnestly;
"I know you do not. My friendship is the
only ray of light in his dreary existence."

"I do not object," said the mother, seri-

ously. "Yet, as I have often told you, I have a presentiment that he will be in some way connected with your after-life."

"Does this presentiment point to good or evil?" said Eric, gravely.

"I cannot tell," said she; "but his very presence fills me with a vague sense of uneasiness."

Supper was called at the moment, and the Udaller remarked, as he rose with cheerful alacrity to obey the summons,

"I must confess I am glad; for what with your talk of omens and the like, and the muttering of the storm without, I am glad of anything more cheery."

Old Gunhild, who had been Eric's nurse, sat at the table with them, and was treated with the most marked deference; for, as she used to say herself,

"I nursed your father before you, and I remember your grandfather, who was a noble gentleman."

Her voice was cracked with age, her eyes had grown dim, her step unsteady; but all these tokens of decline only made her an object of greater respect and tenderness in the Udaller's home.

It was while they were at supper that the storm burst, and, as we have seen, with the

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ly, and the household, wrapped in profound
slumber, became unconscious of its rage, and
likewise unconscious that toward midnight
the clouds had scattered, and the storm-
king withdrawn his thunderous legions.

CHAPTER II.

"A gallant sight it was to see
Their fleet sweep o'er the dark-blue sea;
Each war-ship, with its threatening throat
Of dragon fierce or ravenous brute,
Grim-gaping from the prow; its wales
Glittering with burnished shields like scales;
Its crew of Udal men of war,
Whose snow-white targets shone afar."
Saga of Harald of Haarfager.

THE dawn was very fair when Eric came
out of the house and walked rapidly toward
the cliff. Not a sound broke in upon the
morning stillness but the murmur of the un-
slumbering sea. A purplish mist had come
up from the water, and mingled with the
line of white light that parted the western
sky, telling that the full glory of the sunrise
was at hand. The air was clear and cool;
the short grass damp with the dew; the

fishing-boats lying at anchor out some distance from the shore. At the foot of the cliff Eyvind was waiting with the boat and fishing-tackle. Eric leaped from point to point of the rock, and soon gained his side. The air and exercise had given him color; his hair was blowing about carelessly; he resembled, in the flush of his daring youth, a young Berserker setting foot on his seaward-bound scow.

The young men steered their boat toward the Fetlar shore, where the fishing was excellent. They were usually absent all day upon these expeditions, and returned with strings of fish gleaming and glistening with the phosphorescent colors that these creatures catch from their watery home. Eric often fancied, as he gazed intently at them, that their round, glassy eyes seemed to wear a wise, care-worn look, as if they had strange secrets, found in the sea-deeps, and not to be told to ears profane.

Eyvind accompanied Eric home that night, leaving his mother well, and in one of her calmest moods. She had busied herself putting the house to rights, and prepared some food, of which she herself partook. Eyvind sometimes fancied that, had he understood her foreign speech, she would

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at such times as this he fancied there was a
ray of intelligence on her face, but, alas! he
was a stranger to her, and her language was
unintelligible to him. He used to think
that when, during these intervals of calm,
she addressed him, she seemed disappointed
at his failing to understand, and at last sunk
into a silent, stony indifference from which
she could not be aroused. Still it was al-
ways safe to leave her alone at such times,
and he accompanied Eric home without the
slightest apprehension for her safety.

After supper Eric gave Eyvind a bench
before the fire, and stretched himself on the
rug. His father and mother sat in their ac-
customed places, and old Gunhild had her
comfortable corner close to the hearth.

"Mother," said Eric, coaxingly, "it is long
since you have told us any of your Norse
legends. Tell us some to-night, after our
day of fatigue."

The mother smiled.

"You are always ready with a plea," she
said, and he knew she meant to grant his
request.

"Tell us the story of Sigurd the Crusa-
der," he said, entreatingly—"he that fought
so bravely in the Holy Wars. Eyvind has

never heard it, and I but half remember it."

The mother stroked the boyish head as she began her tale.

"He was a man of might," she said, "and was always clad in blue, shining armor that dazzled his foemen's eyes. You know that when King Magnus died, his three sons, Eystein, Olaf, and Sigurd, were chosen to reign over different parts of the country. All this I have told you, however. But when Sigurd was fourteen years of age, the Skopte Ogmundsson came from beyond the sea, and brought tidings of the strange countries and the strange sights he had witnessed, and Sigurd's subjects called upon him to lead them thither, where they, too, might win wealth and glory. Four years from that time Sigurd went to England, and joined with William, the king of the English. When the long winter was over, they set sail, and they took their course toward Valand and Galicia. When the Yule-tide was past, Sigurd fell in with the heathen; then he would have been plundered and his vessels taken, but he fought bravely, and gained the victory. And when he had landed in Spain, then called Jacob's Land, he took many castles belonging to his pagan foemen,

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and, as he went through that and the ad-
joining countries, did battle courageously
against them. And as he sailed, he came to
the shores of Serkland, which is the country
of the Moors, and there lived some of these
fierce people in an immense cavern, where-
in they kept all their plunder. Within the
cavern was a great wall, built by them as a
fortification. So, when Sigurd and his men
had forced their way thus far, the heathen
depended on the stone-wall for protection.
But Sigurd caused his men to light a fire,
and smoked them out of the cave, possessing
himself of all their spoils.

"As time went on, he reached the kingdom
of Sicily, where dwelt the brave and power-
ful Duke Roger. This good ruler advanced
to meet Sigurd, and entertained him right
royally; so that when he was leaving he
took the duke by the hand, and, leading
him to the throne whereon he himself had
sat, placed him thereupon, and declared he
should be king for evermore in Sicily; for in
those times a king could raise a duke to the
throne, or a duke a marquis to a dukedom;
and Roger afterward was surnamed the
Great.

"In the summer-time, when warm, south-
ern breezes, heavy with the odor of spices

and the rich fragrance of tropical flowers, were blowing across the Greek Sea, Sigurd sailed to Palestine. When Baldwin, who was then king of Jerusalem, heard of his coming, he said,

"Know ye, my people, that a great and mighty king is coming from the North to visit us. He hath done many gallant deeds, and we must receive him well; but we shall first discover his power and magnificence. Bring forth your most gorgeous vestments, and cast them upon the road: if he ride over them, he is indeed a great king; but if he turn aside, he keepeth not royal magnificence."

"But Sigurd rode straight over the garments, and told his followers to do the same; and Baldwin was mightily impressed therewith. Then Sigurd abode with him till the leaves were falling and the autumn-time had come. Baldwin gave him relics, and among them a splinter of the wood of the True Cross; he also made great banquets for him and for his followers. Together, the two kings took a town in Syria called Saet; and when the spoils were divided, Sigurd made gift of his to Baldwin.

"Soon after, he sailed away in his silken-sailed galleys to the country of the Greeks.

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And the emperor thereof ordered rich garments and precious stuffs to be laid in his way; but the Norsemen regarded them not. Sigurd had his horse and the horses of his men shod in gold; and one of the shoes coming off in the streets, the people found it, and marvelled much. Harps and cymbals were sounded before them, and minnesingers, preceding them, chanted triumphal strains. In the hall of state, the greatest magnificence was displayed. The emperor sent in purses of gold; but Sigurd, disdain- ing even to glance at them, had them di- vided among the people; and the minne- singers, returning, told the emperor, who marvelled, saying,

"Rich, indeed, must he be."

"And he sent chests and coffers of gold, but the king gave them to his people; and the emperor said,

"Either he must far outrival all other kings in splendor and magnificence, or he hath not the understanding which kings should have."

"And he sent, a third time, the costliest garments of purple and rings and ornaments of gold; and the king put the rings on his fingers, and thanked the emperor in many beautiful words, but gave what he had sent

to his people. And the emperor had the games played in his honor at the Padreint, which was a flat plain surrounded by a high stone-wall; round the wall were earthen banks, where sat the spectators. Many ancient mythological events were represented by these games.

"Once King Sigurd had bidden the emperor to a sumptuous feast, and no firewood wherewith to prepare the viands was to be had in the town; so the king ordered great quantities of walnuts to be brought, and these served for fuel. Then the Empress of the Greeks, who had occasioned the dearth of firewood to see what Sigurd would do under such circumstances, said,

"Truly this is a magnificent king, who spares no expense where his honor is concerned."

"When King Sigurd departed from Constantinople, he gave the emperor all his ships and the costly ornaments belonging thereto. Through many other countries did the king journey, and everywhere was he received with the greatest honor. At last he returned to his own kingdom, where he was hailed with the greatest joy by his people."

"He was a glorious king, mother," cried Eric; "brave, and noble, and generous."

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"Glorious, indeed!" said his mother, half dreamily. She was lost in her visions of the past glories of her race. She sat half in shadow; but the red light from the hearth fell softly on her face, and brightened her dark gown. Eyvind did not speak, but his black eyes were fixed upon her with a strange, intense expression. His face had a look of curious exultation, as one who shares in the triumph of some noble forefather. Eric, too, was excited; his eyes were shining in the light of the fire, his head thrown backward, his mouth slightly parted. The mother glanced at him fondly, caught the strange look on Eyvind's face, and wondered. Then she turned to her husband; he was fast asleep in his chair, his pipe having fallen on his knee and covered it with ashes. She was not surprised; only sighed very faintly, and went on with her story:

"Many tales are told of him after his return to his kingdom. Once, on a Friday, the steward sent to ask the king what should be served on the royal table, and the king answered,

"What's best—flesh-meat."

"And the meat was served. As the king was in gloomy mood, none dared to say him

day, and the blessing was pronounced. Then Aslak Hane, who had journeyed over the seas with the king, and, though of low lineage, stood high in his favor, said to him,

"What is it, sire, that smokes on the dish before thee?"

"And Sigurd answered,

"What think'st thou is it?"

"Then Aslak, answering, said,

"I think it is flesh-meat, and I would it were not so."

"And the king said,

"But if it be so?"

"It would be vexations," said Aslak, "to know that a gallant king, who has gained so much honor in the world, should so forget him. When you rose up out of the Jordan, sire, after bathing in the same water as God himself, with palm-leaves in your hands, and the cross upon your breast, it was something else you promised, sire, than to eat flesh-meat on Friday. If a meaner man were to do it, he would merit a heavy punishment. This royal hall is not so beset as it should be, when it falls upon me, a mean man, to challenge such an act."

"The king was silent; but he did not partake of the food, and shortly had it removed, and other food brought in. The

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courtiers urged Aslak to fly for fear of the king's vengeance; but he made answer, saying, 'That if he died then, he was well prepared, as he had saved the king from sin.'

"And the king, calling him after, gave him three farms, and told him it was less than he deserved, seeing that he had saved him from a great crime."

"Aslak was a hero, mother, was he not?" said Eric, musingly, "even though he was not a king nor an earl."

"He was, indeed, my son," said the mother, "for he had courage to combat even his king rather than let him do wrong. That is the truest kind of heroism—sacrificing one's own interest for the right. Remember that, my boy, and let my words come back to you when, perhaps, the lips that uttered them are cold."

"I will remember, mother," said Eric, earnestly; "and perhaps some time the story of Aslak will teach me what I ought to do."

Such were the tales the mother told him and his strange companion on many a winter night, within the shadow of the home-hearth. Such, too, were the morals she usually contrived to draw when the evening's tale was ended. Such they were, and such

they came back to them when distance, and time, and the great breadth of the ocean lay between them and the sweet-voiced woman who had brightened the winter nights by the Udaller's fireside. Eric and his friend grew to be as familiar with Odin and Thor, their hellish rites and dark sacrifices, the joys of Valhalla, and the mystic celebration of Yule, as the children of other countries are with Mother Goose's Rhymes or the lore of Fairy-land. To them Magnus and Harald, Earl Nakon, or Sigurd of the Raven Banner, worked by his mother's hand, were household names; and oft between themselves they discussed the hallowed life and acts of Olaf the Saint, his efforts to establish Christianity in Norway, and his fervent piety, which induced him to rise at dawn for mass and the singing of matins.

Thus did these tales of the past inculcate in them a love of what was great and good; thus did they form their characters on pure and exalted models. For Eric they had the farther advantage of falling from a mother's lips; she was the scald who poured forth in lofty language the sagas of old, sagas which were inscribed on Eric's young and pliable heart in characters far deeper and more indelible than the ancient Runic ones carved

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upon the unyielding stones. There was an ineffable charm in the legends themselves, which was much enhanced by the narrator's speech and bearing; to her poetic nature they had a half-superstitious meaning; she was thrilled through and through with the glories of the past, and the knightly deeds of the heroes of her race, and as she went she quoted whole verses from the sagas of the scalds. No wonder, then, that long after boyhood was past, Eric listened with delight to his mother's old-time lore, while Eyvind was transported into another land, a species of Valhalla, inhabited only by the souls of departed heroes. In fancy he could hear the ballads of the minnesingers sung with the old fire and tenderness; he could hear the "war-songs shouted from Norse taverus in the darkening twilight;" he could sail over treacherous or stormy seas in the scows, silken-rigged and silken-sailed; and for hours together he gloated over his hoard of legendary joys, which served to brighten the lonely dreariness of his own existence.

"Oh, son of my heart!" cried the mother, turning suddenly to Eric when she ended her tale that evening, "son of my heart, never do anything unworthy of your noble

race! They have left you a legacy of honor. Do you keep it untarnished."

"But, mother," cried Eric, "must I stay forever on this desolate island, shut off from the great, wide world—from fame, from fortune, from hope? Sometimes voices seem to come to me from out the deep waters, calling upon me to uphold the glory of our race. Then, mother, the blood of the vikings leaps in my veins, and I long to go away from here and do their bidding."

"You can do it here, my boy; here among your people is the place where you can most nobly uphold their glory, and guard the inheritance of your fathers. You are the people's idol; let them see, through the years to come, that the blood in your veins is the same pure and untainted blood that has flowed down through a line of chieftains. Live here, honored and beloved by your people, as your fathers have done for generations."

"That may come to pass, dear mother!" cried Eric, impetuously, "but not until I have seen something of the great world, and—"

"What's the boy at now?" cried the Udaller, starting from his sleep. "Who talks of seeing the world? What folly is this?"

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There was silence among the group; the
clock ticked loudly in the room; a clunder
fell out upon the hearth; the room was
nearly dark, and even their own figures
seemed weird and uncouth.

"Bless me, but you keep the room gloomy,
good wife!" said the Udaller, nervously, fidg-
etling about for the huge square of silk that
he used for a handkerchief. "And Eric," he
said, "if you have any roving notions, give
them up, and the sooner the better. While
I live, you will never set foot on the stran-
ger's soil, except it be on one of the neigh-
boring isles."

Eric arose, and putting his hand affec-
tionately on his father's shoulder, said,

"I cannot promise to put the notion out
of my head, but I will not vex you with it.
And now good-night."

"Good-night," said the father, completely
restored to good-humor; "you are leaving
us early."

"I was up at dawn, and on the water all
day long," answered Eric, "and so shall
sleep without rocking."

"Good-night, my lady," said Eyvind, ad-
dressing the mother. "The tales you have
told us will haunt me even in my sleep."

"You love these old tales, Eyvind," said

the lady, kindly; yet even as she spoke to him she shuddered, her presentiment coming strong upon her. "You must come whenever you can," she continued. "But how is it you leave your poor deranged mother so much alone?"

"Ah, my lady," said Eyvind, half sadly, "she is better alone. My presence only stirs her, for at times she thinks me other than I am, and talks to me in a foreign tongue, and in a voice that makes me shudder."

"Your mother is a foreigner, I know," said the lady; "but to what country does she belong?"

"To France, I think," said Eyvind; "she speaks continually of the Loire, and that, I know, is a river of France. But, thank you, lady, for bidding me come so often. I am lonely at the hut."

The lady was touched, and answered kindly, bidding him come as often as his mother's condition would permit.

"Good-night, master," said Eyvind to the Udaller.

"Good-night, my lad, good-night."

Eric went with him to the door; and as they stood a moment, they saw that the moon was lighting up the crags, and falling into the water in rare rifts of silver, form-

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about on their missions of light. Eric watch-
ed his friend depart; saw his footprints on
the sand; heard a night-bird shrieking aloft
in the birch-trees, felt the soft quietude of
the evening air, and the peculiar, silvery
mist in which the moon had wrapped the
earth. Eyvind pursued his lonely way
across the moor and over the crags to the
hut door. His mother was within, asleep in
the moonshine, her head resting on a chair,
her troubled soul at peace. He laid her on
the bed and went out. He seated himself
on an overhanging point of the rock, and
there, till the moon had set, deep down in
the purple caverns of the sea, he kept his
lonely vigil, stirred by the romance of the
past, far away in the blissful realms of his
uncreated world of fancy, forgetful of his
poverty, forgetful of the horrors of the lone-
ly hut, forgetful even of the beautiful moon-
shine—remembering only that he, too, was
heir to the glories of the past, and free to
enjoy their delights. Meantime the moon
looked calmly down on the waste of waters,
looked down with that indescribable effect
produced by its light upon the sea. For,
gazing upon it, the mind stretches out to
immense tracts of ocean, silvered by its ra-

diance, where never a human soul catches the bright reflection, where the roar of the waves, or the shrieking of the sea-birds alone breaks in upon the silence. And it conjures up huge wrecks, once pregnant with human life, dark, dreary, and dismantled; or beholds, in fancy, dead, white faces drifting on through the silver haze, heedless of their destination. At times the imagination goes still farther, flying thence to that other and shoreless sea—eternity—in whose roar and thunder, whose awful sights and sensations, whose gloom and brightness, is lost all cognizance of earthly things.

None of these considerations, however, entered into Eyvind's mind, absorbed as he was in vain dreams of days and people forever departed from the world of the living.

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CHAPTER III.

"Ah, who can say, however fair his view,
Through what sad scenes his path may lie?
Ah! who can give to other's woes his sigh,
Secure his own will never need it too.

"Let thoughtless youth its seeming joys pursue,
Soon will it learn to scan with thoughtful eye
The illusive past and dark futurity."

H. KIRKE WHITE.

THE months and the years flew by with wonderful swiftness, and, like one running in the grass, time left few marks on the dwellers of that stormy ocean isle. Still the morns dawned bright and fair; still the eves fell darkening over the waters; still the sea-fogs rose as soft and purplish; still the many-tinted clouds formed palaces of light and shadow; still the waves lay cool and green, catching translucent colors from the amber sun that darted its fiery arrows into their shell-lined depths. Still the old home of the Udaller stood stern and state-ly, bearing no perceptible trace of the rest-
less monarch's handiwork; the crevices and
chiuks, indeed, might have been to an observ-

ing eye more plentiful than in the days gone by, the mildew might have left more stains, or the creepers on the walls grown higher, and interwoven their tendrils more closely with the stony heart of the old building, but it still gave its sturdy defiance to time, as it had done through the generations of Norsemen who had lived and died, and wooed and wedded within its walls, upon the sea-girt shore of the *Ultima Thule*.

The Udaller himself was still hale and hearty, though, like his sturdy home, the mildew of old age may have shadowed, or the creeping growth of infirmity have twined its tendrils round his stanch old heart; but he was still the hospitable host, the generous landlord, the kind master, the genial friend of years before. But on his wife the footprints of the speeding years were more plainly visible; her hair was almost white, her eyes a little dimmed, her step a little slower, than when we saw her first, ten years before, at her own fireside. Eric, the boyish dreamer of the past, was taller, broader in the shoulders, a little more subdued, a little less impetuous. The boy was a man, but a man who still bore the traces of his boyhood about him. Still he was the idol of his people; still he was the darling of his parents'

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hearts. His mother, with maternal solici-
tude, had chosen him a wife, one who dwelt
in a neighboring island, a pretty, light-heart-
ed girl, with a fine dowry and an even tem-
per. Eric saw her occasionally, but was in
no hurry to woo her; he could wait; life
was long, and youth was bright. Besides,
his darling wish was to get over the sea,
and visit foreign lands. Still, as the girl
was by no means ill-disposed, and could
scarcely conceal her delight when Eric came
to her father's house, or she visited at the
Udaller's with her parents, the mother did
not lose hope; and if circumstances had not
interposed, her hopes were in a fair way of
being realized.

One evening in early winter, Ingeride
came with her parents to take supper at
the Udaller's hospitable board. Some other
youths and maidens had come to share in
the merry-making, and, when supper was
over, to dance. Ingeride was dressed in
her most becoming costume; she had a pret-
ty, rosy face, a trim little figure, and a neat
little foot. As was to be expected, Eric re-
garded these attractions with a complacent
eye, and before the evening was over had
almost made up his mind that a quiet home
life in Foola might, under certain circum-

stances, be tolerably happy. Acting on this belief, Eric devoted himself to the girl, and to such an extent that the respective parents rejoiced exceedingly, and already began to hear in anticipation the sound of Eric's wedding-bells. Farther off were the bells than they imagined—so far off, indeed, that scarce an echo could have reached their listening ears.

Eric had well-nigh decided to try his fate that night; and such was his boyish conceit that he had little fear of failure. She blushed so prettily when he drew near; she smiled so coquettishly; she gave him such bewitching glances out of her soft, dark eyes, that his heart beat high with gratified vanity, which he readily mistook for a warmer sentiment. When the festivities were over, he accompanied Ingeride and her parents a part of the way home. As the parents very naturally left the young people to themselves, Eric was on the point of putting his thoughts into words, and deciding his future fate, when, like a message from afar, he felt a breath of the salt sea-air. The message was heeded; it awoke in him the old longings to leave the island, the old desire to wander, and the decisive words were left unsaid. He argued with himself that

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there was plenty of time to say them; then
he might take a short voyage over the ocean,
return to marry his old sweetheart, and set-
tle down for good and aye in the home of
his fathers; but just to-night he would be
free; it would be time enough; he would
leave it till to-morrow. And so he saw not
the many morrows that would come and go
before he brought his bride to the home of
the Udallers.

As he was returning, absorbed in these
thoughts, he was suddenly aroused by the
sound of voices—angry voices, too, they
seemed to be—as of men disputing. He lis-
tened; the sounds came from the direction
of the cliff. He heard an oath, a blow, and
waited for no more. Without pausing to
reflect that he was alone and unarmed, he
hastened toward the crags, thinking that
some one might require his assistance. A
sudden turn of the rocky path brought him
in full view of the combatants. To his
surprise, he saw Eyvind defending himself
bravely against three or four burly men,
whom he knew to belong to a class between
fishermen and pirates, who were justly es-
teemed as the most lawless and desperate
characters on the island. He waited for no
more, but, leaping down from crag to crag

with reckless daring, called upon them to desist. The men paused a moment, but seeing a solitary figure approaching, they renewed the attack; then Eric, leaping on to the beach, struck a blow with his stick which felled the first of the assailants to the earth.

"Cowardly wretches!" he cried, as the others stood irresolute, "I will teach you to attack a defenseless man."

As he spoke he aimed a blow at the head of another, who seemed to be the leader of the party. The man endeavored to defend himself, while Eyvind kept his companions engaged. The conflict was short and sharp. Two of the ruffians were soon stretched upon the ground. Eyvind, in his deadly rage, would have served the other two in a similar manner; but Eric interposed.

"Take your comrades," he said, "and leave the spot; and the sooner the better, unless you want to feel the weight of my stick as they have done."

The men slowly and sullenly obeyed; but as they went, bearing their insensible companions, one of them turned and said, with a look of hate and rage so fierce that even Eric's dauntless soul was for the moment dismayed,

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"We know you, Eric, son of Ospak. Be-
tween your race and ours has been bitter
feud; but you'll rue this night's work, as
you never rued work before."

"Braggart and bully!" said Eric, laughing
scornfully, "I defy you and your cowardly
crew."

"May the ravens have feast of you, proud
scorner! may the fishes of the sea feed on
your vitals!" cried the man, with deadly ma-
lignity.

"Take care that this stick does not light
upon your head," said Eric, laughing. But
a chill crept over him, nevertheless, at the
ghostliness of the scene, the sinister mean-
ing of the man's face, his weird and awful
threats; nor, when the men had glided out
of sight behind the rocks, did it reassure
him to turn to his companion. Eyvind's face
was livid; his eyes burning with so intense
an expression of anger and malignity that
Eric almost feared he had lost his mind; his
long black hair was wild and dishevelled;
blood was oozing from a wound in his head;
his teeth were set, his hands clenched. A
sort of horror stole over Eric. This com-
panion and friend of his daily life seemed
changed into the evil genius of the scene.
Mastering his feelings with an effort, Eric

laid his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Eyvind," he said, "rouse yourself. Those men may return, and the night is far spent."

In answer, Eyvind burst into a storm of rage against his recent assailants. He told how he had found them stealing the boat, had interposed, with the results Eric had witnessed. Vehemently and passionately, he repeated the foul epithets they had used, described the blows he had received, and the efforts he had made to defend himself.

"You are wounded," said Eric; "and that is another reason you must get home."

He, however, found great difficulty in calming him, or persuading him to return to the hut, whither Eric accompanied him. When they arrived there, the maniac was crouching, as usual, beside the embers. Eric's appearance at once excited her. She rose, and rushing over, gazed long and earnestly into his face.

"Fair and tall and beautiful; but he's not the one," she muttered. "Come out upon the Loire!" she added, with a wild shriek: "La lune éclaire l'eau pure."

"Chantez, ma Marguerite,
La lune éclaire l'eau pure."

"Oh, how the wind roars and rushes in

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my brain!" she cried, in her native tongue.
"It's too stormy a night for the Loire."

Astonishment and a sort of superstitious
awe came over Eric. He had never seen the
crazy woman except in her mildest moments.
What strange fortune, he thought, brought
him into close companionship with beings
so wild and weird as these! He glanced at
Eyvind, and saw him sitting, ghastly pale
and motionless, upon a stool, his head rest-
ing against the wall, and blood trickling
slowly down his face. Eric, going over, ex-
amined the wound; as he did so, the ma-
niac raised her head, and, attracted by the
sight of blood, or by some association of
ideas, rose furiously, and rushed over to the
spot.

"Blood!" she cried, frantically; "did you
kill him? Did you dye his golden hair dark
with blood? Black-hearted stranger, did
you dare to kill him? Curses fall upon your
head! Oh, my beautiful, my golden-hair-
ed— Curses! curses! curses!"

As she spoke, she raised herself to her full
height, her dark face ghastly and distorted,
till, exhausted by the frenzy, she sank down
upon the floor. A moment after she feebly
raised her head, calling to Eric in a low,
plaintive voice,

"C'est ta Marguerite, qui t'aime! Viens, donc, qu'elle t'embrasse."

Meanwhile, Eric, overcoming his sense of horror and alarm, dressed Eyvind's wound, and bathed his face with water till he revived. Then he laid him on his couch, and watched beside him till the day dawned. By that time Eyvind was in a burning fever, and as Eric prepared to go home, he determined not to leave him to the uncertain moods of the maniac, but to send some one thither to watch beside him. When he saw him tolerably quiet, he left him; and, wearied with his long vigil, walked slowly homeward along the crags, enjoying the freshness of the sea-breeze. On his way he met several of the islanders, and, as he absently returned their greetings, did not observe their stare of astonishment. He had forgotten that his clothes, as well as his hands, and even his face, were stained with blood; and this, coupled with his worn and haggard face, gave rise to considerable comment from the passers-by. When he reached home, he laughed at his forgetfulness, and changing his clothes, proceeded to the village to find some one willing to take care of Eyvind during his illness. This was no easy matter. One and all of the village women de-

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clared that no power on earth could induce them to enter that accursed den. At last he found an old crone, who was herself hold in doubtful repute by the islanders, and who, under promise of a liberal reward, consented to take care of Eyvind.

So far all was well; but out of all this various rumors began to gain ground among the people. The story of Eric's strange appearance when seen at early dawn, the blood-stains on his garments, and his confused and agitated expression of face, was bandied about from mouth to mouth, gaining new features as it went; to which the old crone in charge of Eyvind added the further particulars, that whenever Eric made his appearance at the hut, the maniac became furious, and invariably pointing to the wound on her son's head with violent gesticulation, poured out what seemed to be a torrent of abuse.

So it began to be whispered about that Eric had sought the life of his singular companion; and various circumstances were brought forward to prove that they had quarrelled, and that Eric had for a long time pondered his scheme of vengeance. Some pitied the handsome favorite, some censured him severely, but nearly all be-

lieved the story. It was adduced, in support of the rumor, that a stranger who had witnessed the struggle between them had appeared in the village, and given his account of it with every detail. This was, in fact, the case—one of the men of the caves, as they were called, having taken advantage of the suspicions rife in the village to attain his dastardly revenge.

Meantime Eyvind lay unconscious of everything, and it was feared that reason would never return to him. He raved in a wild delirium, and tossed about and moaned, consumed by a burning fever. Eric was unwearied in his attendance upon him; but to the people this was only a proof of his remorse. For some time Eric had no inkling of the truth. He observed that people greeted him coldly, or did not greet him at all, and that some who still greeted him as of yore had a look of reproach or sadness on their face that he could not understand. He supposed that his intimacy with Eyvind had produced its natural result, and did not allow himself to grieve over it. It never occurred to him that such a crime as the attempted murder of his friend could be imputed to him, and that by the very people who so lately held him as an idol. The

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truth came to him like a lightning-flash. Then, full of passionate indignation, but too proud to give it vent, he grew silent and taciturn, shunning even the faithful few who would still have met him with the old friendliness. This gave confirmation to the dark reports against him, and even his truest friends began to shake their heads and say that only the haunting shadow of some great crime could have so changed his sunny nature. Eric's mother wept in silence, and plainly declared that her dark foreboding had been too soon and too sadly realized.

The fond parents had another source of anxiety: the lawless buccaneers who dwelt in caves at the remotest corner of the island, and there carried on their wicked calling, had been heard to utter ominous threats of vengeance upon Eric, for, in fostering the germ of suspicion and distrust among Eric's neighbors, they had but begun their revenge. Gradually the Udaller and his wife were forced to the sad conviction that the safest and wisest course would be to carry out their son's favorite scheme, and allow him to leave Foula. They saw how the boy suffered, and the effects his suffering had produced, and their hearts were wrung. Having come to this conclusion, they determined

to speak of it to Eric, mentally picturing his joy and gratitude. So, one evening, they sat by the fireside and waited for his coming. The mother sat pale and quiet, and as the Udaller watched her attentively, he thought he saw a tear fall on her dark gown; his own eyes grew dim, for well he knew that the shattered remnants of a mother's day-dream had caused those tears. He could follow her thoughts back through the long years that she had seen her boy the idol of his people, and had prophesied for him a future of love and honor beside the hearthstone of his fathers, when the two old people who sat there, lovingly making plans for him, would have stolen away, each in turn, to the church-yard and to quiet graves, in the shadow of ancestral tombstones.

At last they heard Eric's step at the door, heard it cross the threshold, and presently saw him enter the room.

"It is a cheerless night," said his mother, making the same remark as once before, when all the world was bright to him.

"It is indeed, mother," said Eric, wearily, "and I am glad to get home."

"Does Eyvind continue the same?" asked the mother, anxiously.

"The same," said Eric; "there seems to be

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no change from day to day, and I fear, poor fellow, he is doomed to share his mother's fate.”

“And you, my poor boy?” said the mother, gently, “what is to become of you if he never recovers his reason?”

“I do not know,” said Eric, drearily; “I suppose I will drag out my life some way.”

“You shall not, my son,” said the mother, warily; “your father and I have talked the matter over, and have decided to let you have your will and leave Foula for a few years.”

For one moment Eric's face brightened. Then he shook his head; he did not say, “Your kindness comes too late,” but the look on his face plainly expressed it.

“I thank you both from my heart,” he said; “but it cannot be—just now, at least. I can never leave Foula with a tainted name. When my innocence is proved, and my name again above reproach, then—”

He sighed, and did not finish.

“I once fondly dreamed,” he began again, with a bitter laugh, “that, as an honorable gentleman, I stood where suspicion could not reach me; yet they have dared to suspect me of a crime too base for the basest of them—a cowardly, loathsome deed.”

“Do not think of that, my boy,” said the

mother. "Go away till you have recovered your health and spirits. Your name will be cleared none the less certainly or speedily for your absence."

"It is useless to talk of it, dear, kind mother," he said; "I cannot go till I stand as I stood before."

"Perhaps you are right," said the mother, sighing; "it might be construed into a tacit acknowledgment of guilt."

"By my honor, he is right!" said the Udaller, bringing down his fist on the arm of the chair. "An honest man will never run away when there is danger to be met, or sorrow to be borne."

"Thank you, father," said Eric, quietly; and then there was silence.

After supper had been served, Eric went out, and, passing along the old familiar way over the crags, came to the hut. Eyvind's mother sat in her usual place, but neither spoke nor stirred when he entered. The old crone from the village was keeping watch beside the couch, where Eyvind seemed to be sleeping. Eric bent over him, and listened to his breathing: it was gentle and regular, like that of a person in full health. The sleeper's face was painfully emaciated, his eyes sunken, his hair unkempt. Eric sat

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down, and looked at him long and intently; but when the crone offered to get a candle, he made a hasty gesture of dissent, satisfied with the imperfect light of the fire. Then the room was silent; there was a faint, restless moaning of the sea without, a gentle plashing of the waves against the rocks—for the tide was low—and a sobbing sound of the wind among the rocks; but these were familiar sounds to those who dwelt near the water, and the hearers were scarcely conscious of them.

How long he had sat there Eric could not precisely tell; but it seemed to him about midnight when he saw a change on the sleeper's face. As he bent still nearer, Eyvind opened his eyes, and, for the first time in many weeks, there was a gleam of intelligence in them.

"Eric," said he, clearly and distinctly, though faintly, "where am I, oh! where am I?"

"You are at home," answered Eric, suppressing all signs of his own deep emotion.

"At home?" said Eyvind, while Eric listened breathlessly; "but oh! I have been so far away, and seen so many strange faces!"

"But you are at home now, and with me," said Eric, soothingly.

"Why are you here? And why am I in bed?" said Eyvind, with that distinct utterance so often noticeable in people recovering from delirium.

"You were a little hurt," answered Eric.

"Hurt?" said he, wondering; then he was silent for several moments.

"I remember now," he said; "four men attacked me, and you saved me at the risk of your life. Then you brought me home and dressed my wound, and—" he closed his eyes wearily, but murmured, "oh yes, I remember."

Eric was inwardly raising his heart in thanksgiving to God. The crone was all on the alert; she had got a clue to the whole affair, and would hasten to spread it among the village gossips. Eric at last was fully justified, unless Eyvind relapsed into unconsciousness; then his explanation of the matter might be considered as the confused wanderings of his delirious fancy. Eric remained with him till morning, and left him perfectly restored to consciousness. Then he rushed home, and threw himself into his mother's arms in such a transport of joy that it alarmed her.

"And now," he said, when he had told his story, "I shall be free to leave Foula—"

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parting with you and my father."

He spoke with such a stern joy, wholly
apart from the boyish pleasure wherewith
he would once have hailed his approaching
departure, that the mother's heart was trou-
bled. She saw that the deep springs of his
nature had been jarred by the cruel wrong
and injustice done him; and she knew, with
a mother's instinct, that his old, frank trust-
fulness could return no more.

The news soon spread through the village,
and exaggerated accounts were rife of Eric's
brave defense of his friend. The villagers,
so lately cold and distrustful toward him,
flew to the opposite extreme. He was placed
on a higher pedestal than ever before, and
raised to a greater height in popular esti-
mation. He received their adulation with
a proud coldness, which told how deeply
their injurious suspicions had touched his
sensitive heart. From that time forth he
had but one desire—to leave the island, and
find himself far from the fickle and ungrate-
ful islanders. So, as dawn succeeded night,
and eve the brightness of the noonday; as
the high tides, with turbulent roar, followed
the deceitful calm of the ebb, his prepara-
tions for departure were being completed;

and at last the day came. Out upon the green waters lay the vessel that was to bear Eric away; on the shore stood an eager crowd to bid him godspeed. He was paler than usual, but his manner was calm and composed. He listened to the good wishes of the people with an indifference that showed plainly how little he prized them; yet he spoke courteously to each and all. Only to one or two among the number did his farewell grow warm, his eyes misty, and his hand-shake cordial. Eyvind had stolen out, still wan and feeble; he parted from his friend and comrade in an agony of passionate grief.

"Only for your mother," said Eric, "we two should never have parted. As it is, if ever you are free, I will send for you. Will you come, Eyvind?"

"As Heaven is witness," said Eyvind, solemnly, "even if it be to the ends of the earth."

It was time for Eric to ascend the vessel's side. He turned to his father and mother. They showed their gentle blood and ancient descent, as they stood, sorrowful and dignified, tinged with the gloom that was to fall on the ancestral home of the Udallers when the heir of their race was gone. Eric wrung

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his father's hand, looked long and lovingly into his face, then turned to his mother. The keenness of her grief was visible on her face, but she would not weep nor give any outward sign of emotion in presence of the people.

"Mother," said Eric, in a low, distinct voice, meant only for her ear, "I promise you never to sully our name by any unworthy action. I will bring it back as unstained as it goes."

"God be with you, son of my heart!" she said, softly but solemnly. "God be with you now and forever!"

She held him in her arms for a moment; then he mounted the vessel's side, swinging himself up like a practised seaman, and stood upon the deck, handsome and graceful as a prince. He looked around him, saying a mute *Vale* to the scenes of his boyhood and the people he had once regarded as his own true vassals; then he fixed his eyes on his mother's face tenderly and sadly, as if in her was concentrated all that had been the happiness of his twenty-five years of life. Some one touched him on the arm, and, turning, he saw Eyvind.

"My poor friend," said he, "I thought my partings were all over."

For only answer Eyvind let his head fall on his friend's shoulder and sobbed aloud. But the creaking of ropes, the pulling of the anchor, and the drawing away of the gangway, warned him not to linger. With one warm pressure of the hand, Eyvind rushed to the vessel's side. The gangway had been removed. He bounded over the railing, swung himself down, and touched the shore just as the vessel moved. A wail arose from the people; the mother clasped her hands as, straining and creaking, the ship reluctantly moved the first pace or two on its way. Eric's eyes were fixed upon his mother, hers upon him, till their faces grew indistinct to each other. Gradually the trees and the landscape began to fade and grow dim, till they seemed to mingle with the misty horizon lying beyond, and finally became only a line of blue mist rising out of the sea. Thus did the heir of the Udallers leave the home of his ancestors, and steer his bark from ancient Foula.

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CHAPTER IV.

"When you left, as we bade good-bye, the leaves of
the reeds were yellow;
Who then would have thought that the plum-
boughs would have blossomed so oft?"

I turn me to the pictured hall.
Sending my fondest thoughts away, they reach the
northern bounds—
The northern bounds—how far they are, o'erpassed
the hills and streams!"

From the Chinese.

FIVE years passed rapidly by, and Eric
visited all the various countries of Europe,
its principal cities, and its rarest sights. At
first he enjoyed the constant change and ex-
citement and bustle; then there came a time
when he began to grow weary, and to turn
with a sort of longing to home and Foul-
la. Sometimes, at evening, under the soothing
influence of a cigar, he recalled the old
scenes and the old faces, and hummed to
himself between the puffs of smoke fragments
of old Norse ballads which he had learned
to know and love in the boyish days at Fou-
la. His dreams were haunted, too, by the

old legends, the tales of Berserker and Viking, whose unquiet spirits had long since grown still.

The idea of returning to Foula had begun to take shape in his mind; and one evening, at his lodgings in Paris, he was mentally arranging the route he should follow, and the places he should revisit on his homeward way, when a letter was handed him. He broke the seal and read. It was from his mother, and contained strange tidings. The lawyer of a great estate lying somewhere in France had been in communication with Eyvind. Certain circumstances had given rise to the surmise in the French village that he was the son and heir of a noble house, who had mysteriously disappeared years before.

The crazy woman had most opportunely died, and after her death some papers were found which seemed to have some connection with the case. On Eyvind's neck was a locket, containing two miniatures, one supposed to be of his mother, taken in younger and happier days; the other of a man, fair-haired and blue-eyed, probably her husband. From the worn and wasted hand of the dead woman were taken two rings, one her wedding-ring, the other of

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curious workmanship, bearing the crest on
insignia of a noble house. Eric's mother
went on to say that there was little doubt
as to Eyvind's identity, and that he would
be proved heir to the estate. In conclusion,
she declared that he made it a special re-
quest, by the memory of their long friend-
ship, that Eric would accompany him in
quest of the expected inheritance; that he
would wait at Foula for an answer, and, if
favorable, would join Eric at any appointed
place.

"So fate has settled the question of my
going home," soliloquized Eric as he rose to
relight his cigar, for in his excitement he
had allowed it to go out. As he puffed
away at it, he continued to reflect on his
friend's singular good-fortune; and as he
resolved, without a moment's hesitation, to
grant his request, he congratulated himself
on his knowledge of French, which language
he spoke with the greatest fluency. That
very night he wrote to Eyvind, declaring
himself most willing to accompany him
wherever the promised inheritance might
lead him.

The meeting-place agreed upon was Cal-
ais, that city of the past, with its crowd of
historical associations, its quaint, old-time

streets, touched with too perceptible tokens of decay, and its low-lying, sandy skirt of hills. The meeting between the friends was quiet; no enthusiasm, no outward demonstration, only a deep, heart-felt cordiality. After the first greetings, they sat down and studied each other, anxious to see if time and absence had made any changes. Eyvind, gazing intently at his friend, saw the sinuous ease and suppleness of movement gained in the hardy sports of boyhood, joined now to a graceful elegance, owing to his years of travel. He observed in his manner an almost entire absence of the old boyish impetuosity, and in its place a calm self-reliance not easily disturbed. The traces of his boyhood that had hung around him during his early manhood had disappeared, but the old charm was replaced by a more potent one. He had been a boy who easily won the love of others; he was a man who gained, in addition, their confidence and respect. At times Eyvind could see the air of command unconsciously asserting itself through the veil of courteous self-control, and giving to his manner a slight haughtiness; but, in general, the young ruler of the people, the idol of the fishermen, was a polished, self-contained, travelled man of the world. In

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appearance, however, he was very little changed; his hair was not a shade darker—the same bright yellow that the sun used to turn to gold on the beach at Foula. His complexion was somewhat fairer: it had once been tanned almost to swarthinness; it was now a warm, clear olive. The expression of the face was less scornful, and more thoughtful; less contemptuous, and more gentle.

Eric was meanwhile observing his friend with no less attentive eyes, and as the result of the scrutiny, he saw a man shorter by a head than himself, broader built, and more powerful; the face, naturally swarthy, tanned by exposure; the eyes and hair of a vivid black; the general appearance as unchanged as if they had parted yesterday. Certainly, the heir-expectant to a noble estate was not handsome. Eric admitted this, yet his face was not uninteresting. It had, though, a certain gloom and weirdness, or perhaps Eric fancied so, thinking of his strange and mournful past.

While this scrutiny was being conducted on either side, they did not sit silently gazing at each other; they talked on commonplace subjects, and Eyvind gave Eric the trivial gossip of the island. The details of

home, the mention of half-forgotten places and people, fell upon Eric's ear like fragments of an old familiar lay. He listened entranced, interrupting the speaker only now and then with a question, till at last they drifted on to the important subject that had brought them together.

"One night," said Eyvind, "I was sitting out upon the rocks, watching the tides. It was a dark night, and there was no other light than that from the fire in the hut. Strange fancies came into my mind, and I thought I heard voices coming, too, from the hut. I rose and went in. I saw my mother sitting by the fire, her head resting on a chair as I had left her. I thought she was asleep, and would have gone out again, but I heard her give a deep sigh. I went over and touched her. She opened her eyes and looked at me, but said nothing. I raised her, and placed her on the bed. She began to murmur to herself, and spoke of the Loire. Then she tried to sing, in a very feeble voice, a verse of some old French ballad she had often sung before. Her voice grew fainter and fainter. At the last words of the song, it died away completely. I listened, but she said no more. I bent over her. She was dead. Her troubled mind was quiet at last."

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"Poor soul!" said Eric, softly; "her one bright memory pursued her to the end. I trust, indeed, she has gone to a country calmer, brighter, more beautiful than the land beside the Loire she loved so dearly."

"May she rest in peace!" said Eyvind; "hers was a sorrowful life. But after she was buried, we saw that in certain papers and articles found were pretty conclusive proofs of my claim to a French estate. The lawyer had communicated with me before, but the proofs were wanting. Now I think my claim can be made good."

"I trust so," said Eric. "But where is the estate in question?"

They both paused; for the clock in the belfry tower, in a neighboring square, struck midnight, and they waited till its solemn strokes had ceased. Then Eyvind answered,

"The estate lies in Touraine. The family are of Scottish descent, but fled from their native country in troublous times, and for services rendered in various wars received grants from the kings of France."

"So you are a Franco-Scot," said Eric, laughing; "and what is to be your name, most potent seigneur?"

"Douglas," answered Eyvind. "My father was Robert Douglas, and my mother

Marjorie, or, as she was called in France, Marguerite Stewart."

"Two of the noblest names of Scotland," said Eric. "Why, this makes the matter still more interesting: Scottish settlers on French soil, and of the race of good Lord James, who bore away the royal heart of the Bruce."

It was near morning when the friends separated: they had so much to tell each other; such recollections to go back upon; such plans for the future to discuss. The hours flew unnoticed; and even when, smiling at their forgetfulness, they bade each other good-night, neither felt like sleeping, and would willingly have prolonged their vigil for hours to come.

Next morning, Eyvind showed Eric the documents found after his mother's death. They were yellow with age, and flecked here and there with dark spots of mildew; but though Eyvind could not understand them, as they were drawn up in French, and their contents bewildered Eric, they concluded that they might be of great weight in the lawyer's opinion, and resolved to let him have them as soon as possible. Eyvind

* Branches of both these families did really settle in Touraine, acquiring great distinction there.

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then brought out the locket, heavy and
massive, but tarnished a little by time. It
contained two portraits. The first was that
of a man young, and fair, and comely; the
second, a pale, dark woman, with large, ex-
pressive eyes.

"How strongly you resemble your moth-
er!" said Eric; "that is, as she looks in this
miniature. She must have altered very
much. I should never have recognized her."

"The resemblance will be a strong proof
in my favor," said Eyvind; "but look at the
initials: M. S. and R. D. I think that lock-
et alone would establish my claim."

"If it can be proved how it came into
your possession," said Eric; "but the resem-
blance is an undeniable point in your favor.
And now show me the ring. I presume this
is the Douglas crest," he said, examining it;
"it is most curiously wrought, and bears the
motto of their house."

"The same initials are in that," said Ey-
vind; "it was evidently a love-token to my
poor mother from her betrothed, afterward
her husband."

The wedding-ring, which Eric next exam-
ined, was a thin, slender hoop of gold, a good
deal worn and tarnished. Eyvind had tak-
en it from the wasted marriage-finger of his

dead mother's hand. When Eyvind had shown his friend all these relics of the past, sacred now in their association with the hapless dead, links with a bright past which had availed her nothing, they together wrote a letter to the lawyer in charge of the Douglas estate, asking what further steps were to be taken in the matter, and offering to give him such proofs as lay in their possession. The lawyer was in his dingy office, surrounded by parchments and documents containing many a strange history, when the letter was handed him that threw a strong light on what had been a mystery for twenty years.

Meantime, Eric and his friend busied themselves in seeing the few sights that Calais still afforded; wended their way through its old-fashioned streets, entered its Cathedral, and stood enraptured before the altar-piece, which was from the hand of Vandyke. They gazed in awe on its rich and sombre tints, thrown into relief by the mediæval gloom of the church, and by the warm glow from the painted cathedral windows.

The friends thoroughly enjoyed the days spent in the old town by the sea, and among the traces of that historic past in which Cal-

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their brief sojourn there with the liveliest
emotions of pleasure.

At last, however, they received an answer
from the lawyer. He advised them to come
straight to Touraine, and formally lay claim
to the estate. He declared himself willing,
and even anxious, to examine the proofs in
their possession, and expressed a sincere
hope that Eyvind might be proved heir to
the estate, which was now in possession of
a lady, and would eventually pass out of the
family. Thus encouraged, they determined
to lose no time in reaching Touraine, and at
once began their preparations for departure,
cheered by the prospect of success.

CHAPTER V.

"Time's restless wheel another turn hath made ;
Another scene in life is now displayed ;
The curtain fell and rose, and lo ! what change !
* * * * *
And, one by one, new actors through the stage."
M. B. BROWN.

THE evening was cold, and gray, and raw, when the two young men found themselves in a little village of Touraine, near one of those towns so famous in the chronicles of the past, so unimportant in the history of to-day. After they had left the Grande Chaussée, their way lay over a rugged and uneven road, that seemed to exhaust the last lingering energies of the lean post-horses. Our travellers, weary and worn, joyfully alighted at the door of a little inn, which, according to the rude, painted sign swinging above the porch, was known as the "Inn of the Vine." It was a low, broad edifice, with sturdy walls, and a large, overhanging roof, thickly covered with thatch, from the midst of which appeared the windows of the upper story. The young men were ushered into what seemed to be a great hall or sitting-room.

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The ceiling was supported by heavy cross-beams of dark wood, giving it a curious and antique appearance. In the centre of the apartment stood a table covered with a snow-white linen cloth. On the broad hearth lay blazing logs, crackling and sparkling as if celebrating some festivity of their own. In a sort of recess near the hearth sat a couple of women, busy with the distaff and shuttle, so that the monotonous hum of the wheel mingled with the pleasant crackling of the fire. A stout woman rose to greet them, courtesying, and asking in her native *patois* their commands. Her face was brown and wrinkled, but not unpleasant. Her scarlet skirt, white bodice and cap, were in keeping with the cheerful comfort of the room. The landlord, who was smoking his pipe near the fire, addressed the travellers in French, and bade them welcome to the inn.

While supper was being ordered, they seated themselves near the fire, and amused themselves examining the place and its appointments. The most prominent feature thereof was a large walnut press, extending almost from floor to ceiling, and polished till it shone again. On the top were china figures, in garbs scarcely more picturesque than the people of the inn. On the wall beside it

hung a large wooden holy-water font, and here and there around the room various colored prints of sacred subjects.

On Eyvind the room made little impression, except such as was produced by its substantial comfort, in contrast to the gray gloom of the wintry dusk, through which snow was falling in soft, heavy flakes, and just beginning to whiten the landscape. But with Eric it was different. Fully alive to the quaint romance of the little inn, he could have believed himself in an ancient hostelry of the past. Whereas Eyvind had but lately lived amidst scenes more picturesque, mingled with people as quaint and primitive, and whose dwellings were as curious and ancient as this, Eric had spent years in the modern world of civilization, and justly regarded this little nook as one forgotten in the bustle of the century, which had left it as it was, a part and parcel of the past.

Their supper was brought in, served daintily and prettily, with French tastefulness and French cleanliness. Eric was in ecstasy; he was charmed with everything, and in such state of mind, that when from her labor at the distaff rose a pale, fair-haired, slender maiden, he was fully prepared to believe her

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a princess in disguise, and the most beauti-
ful of mortals. They both observed her with
some attention. She was prettily dressed
in peasant costume, coarse but picturesque.
Her eyes were blue, her hair a sort of flaxen,
her complexion pale, her features regular.
Yet she was not a beauty, and her claims
to admiration lay principally in that she
differed widely from the dark, merry-eyed,
buxom lasses who abounded in that region.

She cast a hasty glance in passing at the
travellers; then, addressing a few words in
French to the landlord, left the room, and
did not return that night. Meanwhile our
travellers were volubly entertained by the
host and good Dame Lucille, his sister, who
assisted him in the management of domes-
tic affairs since the death of his wife, which
he informed them had taken place nineteen
years ago, at the feast of St. Martin.

When the young men expressed them-
selves ready to retire, they were conducted
to the upper story, and ushered into their
respective apartments, both of which were
exquisitely clean, and furnished with the
best of feather-beds. Our travellers soon
forgot, in their warm depths, the long jour-
ney of the day; but Eric dreamed he had
come to a strange country, where the peo-

ple had been kept in an enchanted sleep for a century, then risen and pursued their ordinary avocations, retaining the garb and speech and character of a by-gone age. He thought he was wandering through its fields and dales, plucking at its magic fruits, when, up from the ground at his feet, started a loathsome reptile, and close beside him he saw the pale, fair face of the peasant-girl of the inn, looking wan and haggard. He thought his mother's voice called him warningly, and he awoke. The stars were shining in softly through the little window with its edges of thatch; he saw by their light that flakes of snow were still falling; and he tried to remember where he was. He soon recalled everything; their arrival in Touraine, the old-fashioned inn, the people, and the object of their coming. Then, again, these thoughts grew indistinct, became jumbled incongruously, and he was soon asleep once more; nor did he wake till the morning sun came streaming in, and flooded all the room.

The day was spent in strolling about the place, awaiting the visit from the lawyer, who lived in an adjoining town. They found much to interest them: the queer little old-time cottages, with their heavy

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thatches, out of which peeped the upper windows; the vineyards, stripped and leafless; the orchards, full of skeleton-like trees, covered with fine, powdery snow. They observed that the women were not conspicuous for beauty, being for the most part dark and swarthy; in the younger ones, their youthful vivacity and sprightliness redeemed them from positive ugliness; but when youth, and its sparkle and glow, had passed away, they were wrinkled, and dull, and homely.

Toward evening the young men returned to the hotel; and, seating themselves near the landlord, Eric began to converse with him on the village and its inhabitants. Nanette, as on the evening previous, was busy with her spinning; finding time, however, to steal a furtive glance at the young travellers.

"I suppose there are many of the old seigneurs still in possession of their manors throughout Touraine," said Eric to the landlord.

"But yes, monsieur, there are many of them," said the man, taking his pipe from his mouth. "Our own seigneur is dead, but the château still remains in possession of his daughter."

"They are Scotch, are they not?" said Eric.

"But no, monsieur, they are French," said the landlord—"true Tourainese."

"But of Scottish descent?" asked Eric.

"It is said," answered the landlord, nodding affirmatively, "that in the old, old times the first of them came from Scotland, and fought in the wars of the king, especially in those of Louis XII, surnamed *Le Père du Peuple*. Often I have heard the old people tell of their doings in the Italian wars. But that is long ago."

"What is the name of your seigneur, or, rather, his descendants?"

"Douglas," said the man; "there is but one daughter left of them, a beautiful lady, who lives like a princess, shut up in the old house. It is a strange story—that of the disappearance of the infant heir."

"The disappearance of the infant heir?" said Eric. "Why, how was that?"

"It is nigh a quarter of a century ago," said the landlord, refilling his pipe, which he lit with a cinder from the hearth. "I was a young man then, and I used to take great delight in watching the doings of the people at the castle. The old lord was still alive, and was in great delight when his

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 of two years old, who disappeared so mys-
 teriously. One evening his nurse took the
 child to walk; they were seen last by the
 river's bank. It was supposed that they
 were taken away by pirates who had been
 seen around the coast. Nothing more was
 ever heard of either child or nurse."

"Nurse, then, it was, and not mother,"
 cried Eric, excitedly. The landlord stared.

"Then you know the story, monsieur," he
 remarked.

"Did you not say something of the moth-
 er?" said Eric, recollecting himself.

"It was the nurse," said the landlord.

"The mother lived for many years after,
 although bowed down with grief."

"Suppose the child should ever return?"
 ventured Eric.

"*Comment, monsieur?*" asked the old man,
 in amazement.

"I said, suppose the heir of the Douglas
 estates should appear?" explained Eric.

"It is not possible," said the landlord.

"It is believed he has been drowned or
 murdered by the pirates."

That night Eric repeated the landlord's

tale to Eyvind. He seemed deeply moved on learning that the hapless woman he had so long regarded as his mother was only his nurse. It was again past midnight when they retired, so busy were they discussing the old topic with this new light thrown upon it.

Next morning, the lawyer's card was handed to them—M. Victor Maurin. He waited for them in the great room of the inn. They had him shown to their apartments, where they could better discuss the important affairs under consideration. The lawyer was neatly and scrupulously attired in black, according to the custom of French professional men. His manner had all the precise and formal politeness of the old school, but under this old-fashioned courtesy he veiled a keen legal acumen. He begged them to give him a concise and accurate account of the crazy woman, her arrival upon the island, her death, and the circumstances attendant thereupon. He confirmed the landlord's version of the story, and declared that it was not the mother, but the nurse of the child, who had so mysteriously disappeared. He added that it was supposed at the time that the nurse was secretly married to one of the pirates, and had, of her own free-will

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and consent, gone with the marauding crew. This, however, he said, was merely a current report, which had little or no foundation, and did not in any wise affect the bearing of the case. He advised them to lose no time in waiting upon Madame de Montfaucou, to whose care had been intrusted Mademoiselle Hélène, the heiress of the Douglas estate, and the last of her name. He promised to appoint an hour when they might call on the ladies at the château, and discuss Eyvind's claim to a share in the inheritance. The interview was appointed for the next day, if agreeable to the ladies; and the lawyer took his leave, promising to let them know the hour for their visit to the château.

CHAPTER VI.

"A thoughtful child, she read the book of Nature,
Her spirit won its tone from dancing streams;
And the bright smile, enlivening every feature,
Had caught new radiance from the sunny beams.
She loved each flower that by her wayside blossomed,

She loved the bird that sung its notes of glee;
And, blending with all Nature's sweetest voices,
Arose her spirit's gentle minstrelsy."

EMMA WOOD SMITH.

EARLY next morning they received a note from the lawyer, appointing the hour of eleven for their interview with madame. Following one of the pretty little cross-roads, as directed by the landlord, they came, after a short walk, to a sort of ruined gate-way, bearing the armorial ensigns of a noble family. They passed through the arch, and found themselves in a narrow lane or avenue, still strewn with the faded garments of the dead summer—the sere and yellow leaves, dank with moisture; while, rising from amidst this desolation, was an occasional pine-shrub, standing dreary and alone,

C VI.

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the only child of nature that had survived the austerity of winter. Trees still stood in their accustomed places, casting skeleton-like shadows on the road. Their beautiful foliage had died with the sweet sounds of nature, died with the melancholy October and its deceptive brightness, so like the flush on the faded cheek of a consumptive. The wind moaned among the trees as they passed with a soft, musing sound, as of one who pondered gentle memories of a happy past.

The friends proceeded along the avenue till they reached a high wall—so high, indeed, that no glimpse of the château could be had above it, except of the square parapet or tower attached to the left wing. They began seriously to doubt whether there could be any signs of life or warmth beyond that great barrier, which seemed to cut the dwelling off from all communication with the world. They reached the wide, oaken carriage-gate giving entrance to the court-yard beyond, and paused an instant before they raised the ponderous knocker. It resounded through the court-yard; it startled the cheerless silence; but it was almost immediately answered by an old servant in dark and somewhat faded

livery. Passing in, they found themselves in a spacious court-yard, giving unexpected signs of life and activity. It was ornamented with marble fountains, standing in a sort of pathetic quietude, reminding one that the stern hand of winter had been laid on their gush and sparkle. Near them the perennial verdure of some hardy plants lent their best efforts at cheerfulness to the scene. Vases and statuary stood round in profusion. The château itself was half covered with ivy, which crept thicker and darker up the parapet, and through the loop-holes on its summit, once used for purposes of defense. The old walls and their high, narrow, latticed windows looked unpromisingly cold and gray, sprinkled here and there with snow. Just below the steps leading to the principal entrance was a sundial, that, even in the mid-summer, kept, unnoticed, its record of the shining hours, and watched, with unshared joy, for the sun's warm beams all through the long day of sunshine.

Eric and Eyvind looked around them. Servants were hurrying hither and thither. Nearly all were old, and nearly all dressed with a quaint sombreness that struck the young men as in harmony with the scene. The men wore the quarterings of the family

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on the buttons of their livery, and on the silver buckles of their shoes. Both men and women bore themselves with a sort of subdued cheerfulness, which reminded Eric of the legend of the Sleeping Princess and her ancient retainers starting suddenly from their sleep of centuries. Yet, in point of fact, their costume and demeanor were simply such as might be found in any old French chateau, where modern encroachments had not found their way.

However, Eric and his friend were ushered into the hall, where they were met by an old *maitre d'hôtel*, or major-domo, who rang for my lady's maid. Then they were shown into the drawing-rooms; vast and stately apartments, with floors of stained and polished walnut. High wainscoting of the same reached half-way up the wall, where it was met by draperies of rich, but faded, flowered silk. The windows, covered with heavy curtains of similar material, admitted only a dim, dusky light, mercifully concealing the ravages of time on the antique furniture, that was of quaint and old-time character, each piece surmounted by the arms of the Douglasses. The tables and chimney-piece were covered with ornaments principally of Sèvres and the like, of which

some were very odd, and all of considerable value.

As the visitors examined the room, a lady entered — entered with a peculiar stately grace, and a gentle, noiseless step. She was tall and finely built, tending somewhat toward that comfortable condition of middle-life known as *embonpoint*. Her hair was arranged in heavy bands, coming down upon her forehead; her face and manner were haughty, yet gracious; dignified, yet affable. Her dress was rich, dark, and plain; her morning-cap, edged with fine lace. As she approached them she bowed, and at once addressed herself to Eric, speaking English with ease and fluency.

"Monsieur Maurin prepared me for the pleasure of seeing you this morning," she said, "and has also informed me of the purpose of your visit to Touraine."

"Then it will spare us, madame," said Eric, "the necessity of inflicting the details upon you. But, if you do not object, we would like to have your opinion on the validity of the claim."

"Pardon me, monsieur," said madame, still keeping her eyes upon his face; "but are you the claimant to the Douglas title and estate?"

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"No, madame," said Eric, "it is my friend,
who is supposed to be the son of the late
Robert and Marguerite Douglas."

Madame turned and looked long and ear-
nestly at Eyvind. It seemed as if she were
trying to recall some face or faces in the
past, or to discover some resemblance.

"So you are the heir of the Douglasses?"
she said, slowly, "or, at least, such is your
claim."

"But, madame," said Eyvind, eagerly, "I
did not first advance such a claim. Your
lawyer communicated with me several times
before I came here."

"I know, I know," said madame, still mus-
ingly; "he gave me all the details."

"And what is your opinion of the affair?"
asked Eric.

"I have as yet formed no opinion," said
madame, "but I beg you to believe that if
the claim be proved valid it will afford me
the greatest pleasure, for no one can regret
more sincerely than I that the Douglas es-
tate must eventually pass into the hands of
strangers, if the heir should not be found.
You have, I understand, a locket containing
a miniature: may I see it?"

She took it, and examined it attentively.
She opened it, and saw therein the dark,

pale face of a woman, with black hair waved low upon her forehead, soft, dreamy eyes, and small, finely curved mouth. Below the portrait, on the rim of the locket, were the initials, M. D.

"That is undoubtedly Marguerite Douglas," said madame, without raising her eyes from the portrait, "just as I knew her long ago."

The young men fancied they saw a tear upon her cheek, but it might have been only fancy.

"The portrait of her husband is on the other side, madame," observed Eric, and madame turned the locket. She saw there a fair-haired and blue-eyed man, handsome, dashing, and reckless, with a proud frankness and an almost boyish happiness in his face. This time the tear was a reality, and rolled down madame's cheek and on to her satin gown.

"That is my friend," she said, "as he was twenty years ago, before sorrow had begun to tell upon him—that great sorrow of his life which brought him to an early grave."

Then, after a pause, she said, raising her eyes to look at Eyvind, "You do not resemble your father. If you are really a Douglas in name, you are a Stewart in appear-

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ance. And now, if you wish, we will visit
the picture-gallery, and compare these min-
iatures with the original portraits."

She rose as she spoke, and leading them
through a variety of long corridors and
winding passages, opened an arched door
and ushered them into a room, long, low,
and lit from above. The walls were cover-
ed with portraits—men and women in a va-
riety of costumes, each bearing the stamp
of its century. Madame led them toward a
certain portion of the room where the cos-
tumes were more modern: here she paused.
They saw first a tall, gray-haired man, with
massive head and brow, piercing eyes, and
benevolent mouth. Madame declared it to
be that of Robert Douglas the elder, grand-
father of the present heiress. Next they
saw that of Robert Douglas the younger. It
was unnecessary to compare the miniature
with it; there were the same half-curling
flaxen hair, the blue, laughing eyes, the
boyish mouth and chin. They needed not
the inscription beneath—Robert, Viscount
Douglas. Beside him was his wife, the ex-
act counterpart of the miniature, and, as
Madame de Montfaucon readily perceived,
of Eyvind. Looking at him, the resemblance
struck her immediately—the same face, the

same figure, and, as she so well remembered, the same voice and manner. In her mind, at least, lurked no doubt that the heir of the Douglasses was in presence of his ancestors. They whiled away an hour or more among the stately knights and ladies of a by-gone age, who in solemn dignity had hung upon the wall, while years and even centuries had rolled by, and the trees that shaded the windows had reached to a great height, and the grass grown higher and more luxuriant without in the green alleys of the park, and the faces of their descendants one by one passed away into the church-yard, giving place to others. The last in the long line of portraits was that of a young girl. Madame, pausing before it, said,

"This is Mademoiselle Hélène, the present possessor of the estate."

They almost wondered at the bright joyousness of the face; the half-parted lips, the smile that provoked an answering one from the gazers; the eyes soft, dark, and childish, the hair black, and curling a little upon the forehead; the attitude graceful, easy, and unaffected. A rare picture she made in the graciousness of youth and beauty, filling her place in the proud and noble assemblage through whose veins coursed

ND MAIR.

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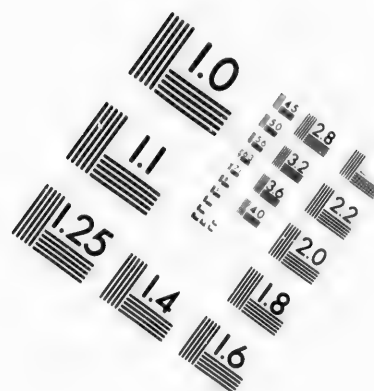
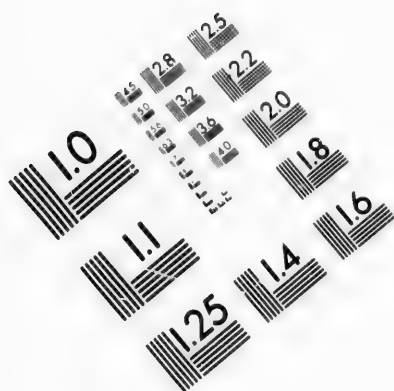
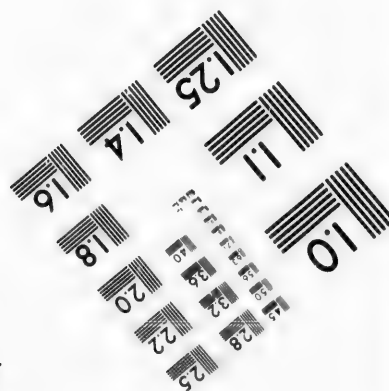
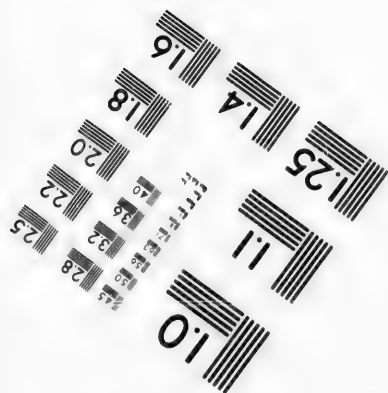
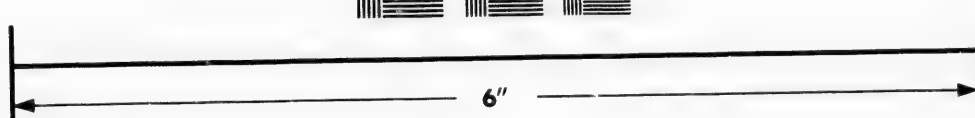
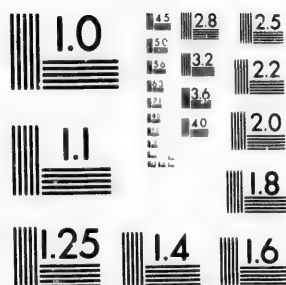


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the life-blood of a hundred earls. Such a picture did Hélène herself make, roaming with girlish freedom through the dark corridors of the ancestral château, praying in the ancient Gothic chapel, or receiving guests in the stately drawing-rooms.

Leaving the picture-gallery, madame cordially invited the gentlemen to remain and dine: dinner was always at mid-day. They consented the more willingly, that both had a curiosity to meet the original of the last portrait in the gallery. Just as dinner was announced she glided into the drawing-room; and they could have fancied she had slipped from her frame and appeared before them. The same bird-like joyousness, the same unconscious grace, the same rich coloring, the same dark, happy eyes. When madame presented the gentlemen, she greeted them with an ease that partook of *naïveté*. Madame, however, made no allusion to the object of their visit. During dinner the conversation was on general subjects. Only Eric, turning to Hélène, spoke of their visit to the picture-gallery.

"And did monsieur find pleasure in looking at the portraits?" she asked him.

"A very great deal of pleasure, mademoiselle," replied Eric, heartily; "it was most interesting, I assure you."

"I love them myself," she said, "though I have seen them every day since my childhood. I go there in the afternoon when the sun is almost shut out by the trees. I fancy all kinds of things about them, and I forget where I am till it has become dark. Then I am frightened, and I run out of the room shivering."

"Why should you feel afraid, mademoiselle?" said Eric, smiling.

"Because I have read all the old *legendes* about them, and some of them were cruel and wicked, and I fear them."

Meanwhile madame chatted affably with Eyvind, who, it must be confessed, was somewhat awkward and constrained, till the dinner was pretty well advanced.

Soon after they arose from the table the gentlemen took their leave, charmed with their morning at the chateau, and looking forward eagerly to a renewal of it. To Eric especially this easy, informal intercourse, the nameless charm felt in the society of refined women, was peculiarly attractive, and he remembered that morning as a green spot in the long bustle and turmoil of the last five years. On their return to the inn they found M. Maurin awaiting them. He had been searching among various docu-

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ments and papers relating to the case, and
examining witnesses who had known the
circumstances of Marguerite Dubois's disap-
pearance with the infant heir of the Doug-
lasses, and he assured them that there was
every reason to expect the speedy establish-
ment of the claim. He said that the papers
found in the possession of the dead woman
threw a strong light on the long mystery,
being a sort of confession, which clearly
proved that Marguerite Dubois did in reali-
ty consent to a plan by which her husband,
Armand Dubois, a pirate, proposed to abduct
the infant son of Robert Douglas, hoping to
obtain a large ransom. It was probably in
a fit of remorse that the woman hung round
Eyvind's neck the locket with the two min-
iatures, and containing a scrap of paper bear-
ing the inscription:

*"This child I do declare to be the son of Rob-
ert and Marguerite Douglas, abducted by Ar-
mand Dubois, with my knowledge and assistance.
Signed, M. Dubois."*

This scrap was carefully inserted between
the miniature and the back of the locket,
and was discovered by the merest accident.
However, as M. Maurin said, it was a pretty
conclusive proof of Eyvind's identity, when

coupled with his remarkable resemblance to the miniature and original portrait. He congratulated him on the probability of his entering into possession of a fine estate, and that at no distant day. After which he took his leave, promising, as before, to follow up the case.

CHAPTER VII.

"At length a sail appears in sight;
'Tis Wealth that comes, and gay and bright
His golden bark reflects the light,
But ah! it is not Love's.

"Another sail—'twas Friendship show'd
Her night-lamp o'er the sea;
And calm the light that lamp bestow'd;
But Love had lights that warmer glow'd;
And where, alas! was he?"

MOORE.

For some weeks the young men remained at the inn, enjoying themselves to the fullest extent in exploring the country round, sailing or rowing upon the Loire, which, though blue enough at times when the sky above casts down its azure reflection, they found to be for the most part a much duller and muddier stream than the ballads of the

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country or the pen of romancers had led them to believe. Yet the days and the twilights they spent upon it were very beautiful; and though they found it a great contrast to the many-phased ocean, they thoroughly enjoyed it. Sometimes, at evening, the varied colors of the sunset sky fell on the waters and relieved their dull commonplace; fell, too, in warm, hazy mists, upon the old wall or embankment, placed upon the left bank of the Loire, to prevent the encroachments of the water. The wall was damp and mouldy, crumbling a little in some places, and leaving openings—beyond the water-level, however, and therefore never repaired. To the left lay a dreary waste of level land, over which the water flowed unrestrained; far above on the cliffs were old, time-worn dwellings, built in the soft rock, which had stood there from an immemorial period. In these the peasants had made their homes, secure from the danger of inundation. Sometimes, at evening, as the young men drifted quietly down the river in the amber haze of the evening light, boatmen passed them singing the ballads of the country; and once a chorus of two or three voices sung, as they swept past them,

"O belle riviere
O charmante asile,
O douce campagne,
O pays tranquille !"

and when the voices died away in the distance, Eyvind told his friend he recognized the air as one the crazy woman used to sing in the hut at Foula.

When they moored their boat that evening, it was dark, and the stars had softly stolen out, trembling and faint, over the dark river, which was just losing the deep flush cast upon it by the red sun.

At such times the young men could believe themselves back by sea-washed Foula, and lived over again the old days of their friendship, the bond between them growing stronger and stronger. They remained at the inn, and made occasional calls of ceremony at the chateau, calls which began to lose their ceremonious character, and became visits of friendship. However, it was still mid-winter when M. Maurin declared that Eyvind, the nameless waif, tossed by the sea on a cheerless shore, was the real, undisputed heir to the great estate left by the late Robert Viscount Douglas. Madame de Montfaucon received the intelligence with the greatest equanimity. It made, after all, but

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a slight difference to her. She would of necessity retain her position as chaperone to Mademoiselle Douglas. The young heiress, whom she certainly loved as a daughter, would still be in possession of a large portion of her fortune, and her own interest in the ancient house made her rejoice in its continuance in the direct line. As for Mademoiselle Hélène, she was overjoyed: the happiness of having a brother far overbalanced, in her unworldly mind, the loss of half her fortune. It was true, her new relative had not fallen very easily into his place as yet. It was not in his reserved and somewhat reticent nature to form new ties with great facility; but when it began to be clear that he was the lovely Hélène's brother, he certainly did make an effort, and no trifling one, to act toward her with all fraternal kindness and affection. This her simplicity and childishness made the more easy, and even before his rights were formally declared, the future Viscount Douglas found himself on tolerably good terms with his sister. Eric, too, had fallen more or less into a sort of easy intercourse with the people at the château. He enjoyed going in and out, dining or supping with them; spending cosy evenings, not in the stately drawing-rooms,

but in a sort of morning-room, where everything was brighter, more cheerful, and more modern.

At last the eventful day arrived when Eyvind was to take his place as seigneur of the château, and be presented in that light to his people. The ceremony was, in some respects, a religious one. It opened with a solemn high mass. The church was crowded. The Douglas pew was wreathed with evergreens and flowers; in it sat Madame de Montfaucon with Mademoiselle Douglas, the one richly, the other simply but prettily, attired, as suited their respective ages. Eric and his friend sat in a pew opposite, and were naturally the observed of all observers. Perhaps, after them, the most prominent person in the assemblage was an old mariner, who had first brought tidings to the village that a woman and an infant had been saved from a wreck on the island of Foula, both of whom corresponded, in almost every detail, to those who had disappeared from Touraine years before. Hence he was very justly regarded as having played a very important part in the drama of the day. He sat in the church, indeed, swelling with importance, his weather-beaten countenance beaming with complacency. However, the

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curé appeared on the altar, mass began, the
choir chanted the beautiful Gregorian mass,
and the little organ pealed out its simple
but majestic strains. When it was ended,
the curé descended to the railing, and pre-
sented Eyvind, who then advanced, to the
assembled people as the future seigneur of
the soil; gave him his father's sword, in to-
ken that he was bound to protect his ten-
antry and retainers; offered him, on a gold-
en plate, the keys of the château, as token
that he thus invested him with the manor-
ial tenure; and, lastly, placed the coronet
upon his head. At the commencement of
this ceremony the choir sang the *Veni Crea-
tor*, then burst into the triumphal strain of
Lauda Sion, and concluded with the *Magnifi-
cat*. When the investiture was ended, the
curé intoned the *Te Deum*, which was in-
stantly taken up by the choir, and with this
the proceedings closed.

When the congregation streamed out of
the church, it was a glorious noonday. The
morning had been gray and cloudy, but the
clouds had all dispersed, and the sky was
blue and clear. It was one of those days of
sunshine that cheers the heart, and fills the
mind with pleasant thoughts and happy im-
ages. It seemed a good omen for the bright

future opening before the once despised and persecuted Eyvind. On leaving the church, the party from the château at once entered the carriages and drove thither. Besides madame, mademoiselle, and the young men, the curé had been invited, also M. Maurin, the little lawyer. The Stewarts from the neighboring seignury, being nearly connected with the Douglaes, were also bidden to the feast. There was Viscount Stewart, a medium-sized, slender man of thirty, fully possessed with his own importance, a little dissipated in appearance, and speaking with a painfully affected drawl. There was his father, taller, bent a little at the shoulders, with a keen, cold face, and a calm, critical glance, which never lost anything of what was passing around him. He was quiet and courteous in manner, and wholly free from affectation of any kind. And, lastly, Agnès Stewart, a quiet, commonplace young girl, with no particular trait of character except a great awe of her father, and a reverential admiration for her brother, whose lightest word was law to her.

When they reached the château, an elegant dinner was served. During its progress the conversation was extremely animated. Viscount Stewart drawled out va-

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ria remarks upon people and things to his cousin, who sat next him.

"So this—I beg your pardon—your brother, I should say," he observed, "and his friend are—Laplanders, I believe?"

"How absurd, Henri!" said Hélène, a little angrily. "You know the Laplanders are *sauvages*. Why, then, do you say such a thing?"

"*Pardor, mon ange*," he said, bestowing a glance and smile on her which he believed had power to charm the most adamant of hearts; "it was a mistake—as they say in English, a slip of the tongue. But why does the other islander travel with him?"

"He is his friend," she answered.

"Ah yes, a sort of—pardon me, *ma mignonne*—I was about to say, keeper."

"You are rude, Henri," said Hélène, angrily, "positively rude. I will not have it. You shall not speak so of my brother and his friend."

"Most tyrannical of beauteous cousins," he said, "I am only teasing you. A little temper makes you so charming."

Here Eric, who sat on the other side of Mademoiselle Hélène, and who had been conversing with madame and the elder Stewart, turned and spoke.

"So you really have your brother," he said, smiling; "yours at last, by the right of investiture."

"I feel very happy to think of it," she said, turning her soft eyes to him, the color still lingering in her face from the recent episode—"I who have been so much alone, for I had no one but Mairaine to care for."

Perhaps there was a spice of feminine resentment in the last words, intended, as they were, for her cousin's ear. He listened, his eyes cast down, a supercilious smile playing over his face.

"I can appreciate the feeling," said Eric, "and can readily understand what it must be to come into possession of a brother."

"And lose a portion of your estate," said the viscount, joining in the conversation with cool impertinence.

Hélène reddened. Eric, looking at the viscount with perfect composure, answered,

"I beg pardon, monsieur, but I did not catch your remark. Might I beg you to repeat it?"

"It would not bear repetition," said the viscount, carelessly. "Besides, I have made it so often to-day that I am becoming weary of it."

"Indeed," said Eric; "then I am to con-

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sider myself most unfortunate in having
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There seemed to be a quiet sarcasm in the
perfect courtesy of the remark that the vis-
count felt and resented.

"You were about to tell me, mademoiselle,"
said Eric, without giving the viscount time
to answer, "something which Monsieur
Stewart's remark interrupted. May I beg
you to continue?"

"I suppose I was speaking of my happi-
ness," she said. "One does not find a broth-
er every day, and a brother so kind and at-
tentive."

"Has he had leisure to inspect his share
of the estate?" asked the viscount, with an
ill-concealed sneer.

"I think not," answered Eric, looking
steadily at the viscount; "and I am sure he
would be indebted for your company in vis-
iting it, you seem so well acquainted with
it."

"My father's sister was the wife of the
late seigneur," said the viscount, reddening;
"it is therefore very natural that I should
know it."

"And feel so deep an interest therein,"
said Eric, again with quiet sarcasm. "At
first I was a little at a loss to understand

your eagerness with regard to it, but now, of course, I am not surprised."

Eric turned, as before, to Mademoiselle Douglas and continued their conversation, as if he regarded Stewart in the light of a meddler, who joins in a discourse where he is evidently *de trop*, but is, nevertheless, entitled through courtesy to a patient hearing. Meantime Douglas, at the head of the table, did the honors, devoting himself more especially to Mademoiselle Stewart, with an ease and grace which astonished Eric, whenever he chanced to glance that way. His old abruptness of manner seemed to have left him, as if the new position and title had worked like a charm. Mademoiselle Stewart did not, apparently, share her brother's prejudice against the strangers. She considered Eric very handsome, and was much pleased with her new cousin, who treated her so kindly and talked so nicely to her.

The elder Stewart, *vis-à-vis* with the curé at madame's left hand, was throwing his wary and critical glances around the table, while discussing the religious and political questions of the day with his hostess and the priest. A union between his son and Hélène had long been a favorite scheme of his. The return of the heir, to whom of

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-à-vis with the curé was throwing his es around the table, igious and political ith his hostess and etween his son and favorite scheme of e heir, to whom of

course would fall the lion's share of the estate, had thrown a damper on his enthusiasm for the match, but now a new one loomed up before his mind's eye. In the dim distance he heard wedding-bells, and saw his little Agnès the happy bride of the young Viscount Douglas. In imagination he saw the estate divided between his children, and he exulted. Yet his calm face gave no signs of what was passing in his mind, nor did he once lose the thread of the discourse.

The curé, a silver-haired man, with a genial, kindly face, gave his opinions with great moderation, never permitting himself to grow warm in dispute, interspersing his conversation with pleasant little anecdotes picked up in his long ministry, which had not been always exercised in country villages. He was a ripe scholar and a cultured man of letters; well versed, too, in the art of entertaining his listeners, who never failed to profit by his remarks. Near him sat M. Maurin, who divided his time between old-fashioned gallantry toward the Demoiselle Stewart, who was on one side of him, and discussions with the curé, who was on the other. At Viscount Douglas's left hard sat an old and decrepit specimen of

humanity, who, in virtue of a fourth or fifth cousinship with the family, had contrived to be invited. She absorbed some share, at least, of the young man's attention, and at such intervals Mademoiselle Stewart was left to M. Maurin.

So the dinner passed off, and the evening came. A grand entertainment was then given. The grounds were illuminated; pavilions were erected, well-heated and comfortable, where refreshments of various kinds were served. The old ballroom was thrown open. Thither came the nobility for miles around; thither, too, came the tenantry and retainers of the house, to pay their respects to the new lord.

The young viscount stood with his sister and Madame de Montfaucon at the head of the room, to receive the compliments and congratulations of the guests. One by one the villagers entered and withdrew. Then the room was left entirely to the people of rank and station. The fête was most brilliant. The young seigneur was courted by the mammas, whereas Eric was the object of universal attention from the daughters. Viscount Stewart lounged around the room, dropping a little sneer here, or a malicious innuendo there, directed against the two

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friends, for he was equally jealous of his new
relative's good-fortune and of Eric's good
looks. However, the dowagers continued
to lay snares for Douglas, and the daughters
to admire Eric. Plain little Agnès Stewart
was in ecstasy because she was so well treat-
ed by the lions of the evening. As for them,
they rather pitied her, and Douglas felt a
sort of interest in his amiable nonentity of a
cousin. The elder Stewart was oppressively
civil to Douglas, and gracious, but more
circumspect toward Eric.

When the evening was over, and the
guests had one by one departed, Douglas
drew his sister away into the conservatory
for a talk, asking her recollections of their
parents, and of her youth among the dear
ones he had never known. Meanwhile Eric
remained in the drawing-room with madame.
It had been arranged that Eric was to re-
main at the château during his stay in Tou-
raine, an arrangement which was pleasing
to all parties.

When Eyvind and his sister returned to
the drawing-room, they remained some time
conversing with the others, and Eric ob-
served, what had not escaped him during
the evening, that his friend was rather de-
pressed, and indulged in fits of abstraction.

He shrewdly suspected, what was indeed the case, that Douglas, to whom wealth and honor had so abundantly been given, as well as the society of congenial friends, was eagerly desiring something more. He was in love; of that Eric was convinced, but readily argued to himself that wealth and station would certainly bring in their train the love he desired. But Douglas feared the worst, and indulged in no such comforting reflections.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Where sombre fir-trees, black and tall,
Rustle in winds that sweep the shore;
And with that leafy murmur seemed
A sound of hollow laughter blent.
With the shrieking wind's appalling cries,
While the roar of waves is heard between,
And through its tumult, low and chill,
That hollow laugh is ringing still.
Ah, see! a sudden flash! Ah, gaze!
What hideous sights its gleam betrays!"

German Ballads.

Nor long after the festivities at the castle, Douglas went out one evening alone, and wended his way toward the inn. It was a beautiful, clear night; the yellow moon was

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German Ballads.

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shimmering on the frosted trees and the snow-covered landscape. Orion and the Twins, paled by the glow and glory of the moon, were keeping their solemn course on through the silent heavens. The throned Cassiopeia reigned her transient reign over the night, and pale but luminous, in the far north, the white radiance of the aurora borealis parted the darkness of the clouds into a seeming dawn of wonderful beauty.

When Douglas reached the inn he found Nanette alone. "Come out into the moonlight!" he said, somewhat abruptly; "I have something to say to you."

She took down a shawl from a peg and wrapped herself in it. The shawl was red, and was becoming, because it gave color to the girl's still, colorless face.

"You wish to speak to me, monsieur?" she said, quietly. "I cannot stay here long."

"I shall not detain you," said Douglas, in a sort of suppressed voice. "What I have to say can quickly be said. It is only this—that I love you!"

"Love me, my lord! You do me too much honor," she answered, trembling a little, and her lip quivering.

"Do not speak of honor in the matter,"

said Douglas, impetuously; "only tell me, does it please you?"

"I do not know," she said, in a troubled voice; "but it is not right. You should love a lady of your own rank, and not a poor girl like me."

"But what does it matter? I am free to wed whom I please. Only give me an answer. Will you accept my love? Will you be my wife?"

"Your wife!" said Nanette, slowly, as if she saw visions of jewels, and coronets, and gay dresses. After a moment's thought, she said, "I cannot answer you now, my lord; I must consider."

"But why can you not answer me? What is to prevent you?" he asked, impatiently.

"Simply that I do not know myself," she said, hastily. "And now I must go; it is late. Good-night, my lord."

She disappeared into the house before he could say another word. He walked home discontentedly. He could not come to any conclusion about her. Then he felt he was at such a disadvantage in speaking French; he knew it so imperfectly as yet. And musing thus, he reached the château. He inquired for madame and the young people. The butler told him they were in the tower.

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He asked the servant to direct him thither. When they reached the farthest end of the long corridor, stretching the whole breadth of the building, the lackey opened a door. They passed up a narrow winding staircase. At the top was an iron door, fastening with a spring. This led them to a sort of little passage, widening out into a large square room. There he found his friends, sitting in the moonlight. The apartment was well heated, furnished in a very antique style, but with all due regard to comfort. Douglas was greeted with a volley of laughing questions. He seated himself, parrying their attacks with what success he could.

"Mademoiselle was about telling us a ghost-story when you came in," said Eric; "we were just settling ourselves to listen."

"Well, consider me as another listener, and proceed, fair sister," said Douglas.

"Could you understand if I told it in French?" asked Hélène.

"Oh yes, I can understand it perfectly," said Douglas; "so begin."

"A very long time ago," began Hélène, "one of the first of our ancestors who landed on French soil was then in possession of the château. He was a dark, swarthy man, and said by the country-people to be cruel and

wicked. Strange stories were told of him. It was whispered that on dark nights red and blue and yellow lights were seen from windows of the castle, and that he there held meetings with an infernal crew, whose hellish rites, which usually took place during storms, could be heard at a long distance. He was scarcely ever seen abroad, but the tale went that sometimes on wild nights his demoniacal laughter was heard in the village. This very tower was his favorite spot, and here he often remained from sunset to sunrise, pacing up and down, muttering to himself, or busied with dark rites, wherein demons assisted him. However, a war broke out, and the summons came from the king for him to appear at court. So the château was closed, and the lord went away. Years passed on, and the trees grew taller and darker around the house, and the château itself began in some places to crumble into decay, and the ivy grew thicker and thicker, till it nearly covered the walls. Flowers, and weeds, and grasses ran wild, choking up the court-yard, overrunning the fountains and the vases. The orchard became a gloomy forest, the trees weighed down with purple and golden fruits, which no one dared to pluck; the park a wilder-

ere were told of him. On dark nights red lights were seen from the castle and that he there assembled a crew, whose meetings took place downward at a long distance, sometimes on wild nights was heard in the tower was his favorite remained from up and down, muttered with dark rites, and him. However, a summons came from the king at court. So the lord went away. The trees grew taller and the chateau places to crumble grew thicker and covered the walls. The grasses ran wild, overrunning the garden. The orchard beneath the trees weighed golden fruits, which the park a wilder-

ness; and the whole place a region of awe, and dread, and mystery. Still, on stormy nights, the peasants said, the castle was illuminated; still the lord's demoniacal laugh rang in the peasants' ears. At length a man came into the country who offered to spend a night in the chateau for a large sum of money. It was agreed upon, and one dark night he came thither. He ensconced himself in the tower; a fire was lit for him, the iron door securely fastened. He was well armed, for he suspected that the noises might have a human origin, and had little faith in the supernatural. He had provided himself with a fine supper, and when he had partaken of it he fell asleep. It must have been late in the night when he awoke. The fire was nearly out, and he felt chilled; the wind was high, and howled and raved around the tower as if it would tear it to pieces. The candle, too, was extinguished, and the room quite dark. As he arose to strike a light, he heard a sound of steps on the stairs, and as if of voices disputing. He stopped transfixed, and as he did so a man appeared inside the iron door. He had not opened it—it had not moved—yet he was there. The watcher never knew why it was that he saw the stranger distinctly, though there

was no light. The apparition seemed to transfix him. His blood congealed, and, distinctly on the chilly air, he heard a mocking, scornful laugh, though the face of the vision remained unmoved. The poor man was horror-stricken, and at the moment the floor opened, and below him, in what seemed to be a deep cavern, were men in strange, wild costumes, crouching over a fire that burned with a deep-red flame. They conversed in a jargon which the watcher could not understand. He could hear the clank of tools, and, as it seemed, the working of metals and the clashing of arms. He saw the strange and solemn faces of the workers. Then the vision faded, and only the man in armor remained, still standing just within the iron door. He seemed now to wear a sad, reproachful look, yet, as he vanished, rung out upon the air a wild, despairing laugh.

"How he finished that night of horror, the watcher never knew; but at dawn he staggered into the village, related the awful tale, and was seized with a fit of illness, from which he never perfectly recovered; and for many a day this was called the 'Haunted Tower,' or the 'Tower of the Demon Workmen.'

"Years after, the wicked lord returned, an

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old and broken-down man, and then it was
 discovered that a band of coiners had made
 their den in the bowels of the earth beneath
 the tower, and there pursued their unholy
 calling, especially when the storm was high-
 est and the winds roared loudest. The mys-
 tery of him who appeared through the iron
 door was never fully explained, except that
 the coiners, anxious to scare away all inquir-
 ers, had dressed up one of their number in
 armor; it was also supposed they had drawn
 away the sliding floor of the tower, disclos-
 ing themselves to view. Yet generations
 had passed before one of the Douglas name
 or any of the neighboring people would vent-
 ure after nightfall into this haunted tower,
 fearing lest the floor should part and dis-
 close the coiners, turned into demons, pursu-
 ing their work in the fire of hell. So runs
 the legend."

As Hélène finished, involuntarily she shud-
 dered, and cast a furtive glance around. Ev-
 ery one was silent, and at the same moment
 a step was heard on the stairs without, as if
 approaching the iron door. Hélène scream-
 ed, and, trembling, drew close to her brother.
 As she did so, some one, indeed, approach-
 ed the iron door. It opened, and the sub-
 stantial form of the major-domo appeared,

with a tray of refreshments ordered by madame.

One ghost-story led to another; the little circle drew closer round the fire, and, partaking of the good cheer before them, kept their vigil till long past midnight. On their way down-stairs, Hélène clung close to her brother's side till they had got safely out of the haunted tower. She drew a sigh of relief when they were once more in the familiar region of the corridor.

"Sometime I must show you all the secret doors and passages around the château," said she to Eric, "especially those in the tower; and, by-the-way, that tower has the greatest possible number of legends connected with it. It is said that a young demoiselle of the house once saved herself in time of war by hastening thither and fastening the iron door. The besiegers rushed fiercely against it, and Lady Agnes, in despair, leaped from the window to the ground; for the outer stairs were not then attached to the tower. She was not hurt, but, rising, hurried away into the country, and, concealed by the faithful peasants, ultimately reached a place of safety. Was she not brave, Monsieur Eric?"

"Brave indeed, mademoiselle," he said,

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demoiselle," he said,

laughing; "but I fear her descendants do
not all share her courage."

"But I might, if it was in time of war,"
said Hélène, gravely. "That makes a great
difference in one's courage."

"We have kept our ghost-stories up to an
unconscionable hour," said madame, looking
at her watch. "*Mes chers, messieurs*, it is af-
ter one!"

"After one!" said Eric. "There is a
witchery about that tower. I begin to be-
lieve it is haunted by gentle sprites, who so
beguile us that the hours fly."

"It is haunted, at least, by memories,"
said Hélène, softly; "and some are beautiful,
but many are full of horror. To-night it
was moonlight, and all was beauty."

"And poetry and romance," said Eric.
"The hours flew by in a spot 'whose every
stone a tale could boast.'"

They were all standing at the foot of the
broad stairs. Douglas took no part in the
conversation. His dark face looked sad, his
manner was even quieter than usual. With
a cordial good-night, the little party sepa-
rated, and the old château was left to the
shadows and the phantom forms that mem-
ory or imagination might conjure up to fill
its stately halls and winding corridors.

CHAPTER IX.

"Why must we love, when our dreams of bliss
Fade all so soon away?
Why must we love in a realm like this,
Of darkness and decay?
Why was the beautiful born to dwell
Deep in our hearts with its mystic spell,
Bidding us worship them all too well—
The idols of a day?"

HITCHCOCK.

EARLY the next afternoon Nanette was sitting at the door, busy with some needlework, when she saw the Douglas carriage with its armorial quarterings coming rapidly along the road, the sound of wheels lost in the treacherous softness of the snow. She looked up as it came in sight. She made a pretty picture—her peasant dress and cap, her colored woollen shawl, brightened by the sunshine, her pretty little attitude, her upraised face. The carriage stopped, and madame said a few words to the girl in her most gracious and affable tones; but Nanette only saw that Mam'selle Hélène was on the seat beside her, in the daintiest

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of morning costumes, smiling and fair and sweet as a seraph, and that opposite her was Monsieur Eric, absorbed in the words and smile. When the carriage stopped, he turned quickly, and, seeing Nanette, uncovered his head and bowed with the most kindly courtesy. Yet when they had passed on, Nanette thought the sunshine had grown dark, and the air chill and cheerless. Rising with a shiver, she went into the house, and stood warming herself at the fire. In her mind she was going over and over again the glimpse she had caught of Hélène's beautiful, happy face, and of Eric, handsome and graceful and courteous as a prince. Madame was entirely left out of the picture, though she was richly attired, and had smiled and bowed to Nanette with the perfection of graceful condescension.

Making pictures was not, however, all that occupied her active mind. She was reflecting how she could see and speak to Eric for an hour or so, without awakening her father's suspicions. She resolved that, however she might accomplish it, she must see him, even once. Consequently, at dusk that same evening, Eric, standing in the morning-room of the château, looking thoughtfully out of the window, was star-

tled by a servant, who handed him a piece of coarse paper. It contained the words:

"Nanette is in great trouble. Have pity on her grief, and, in your goodness, come and assist her."

He read it with his back turned to the lackey, who stood waiting for the answer. He knit his brows, he bit his lip, then, turning to the servant, asked,

"Who brought this paper?"

"A boy, monsieur," answered the servant.

"A boy? Very good; there is no answer: you may go."

The man left the room. Then Eric began to ponder on the strange message he had received. He could not imagine what her grief could be; however, he resolved to go. It was not in his nature to refuse help to any woman who might require it. At dinner he said nothing of his intention, but when it was over, simply stated that he was going down to the village. He fancied he saw a cloud on his friend's face, and being aware of his secret, feared that he suspected. When he reached the inn, Nanette was waiting for him. It was a mild, calm night, though it was still March. Nanette whispered to him,

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"We cannot go in; the room is full. I
could not speak to you there."

"As you please, Nanette," he answered,
briefly, feeling vaguely uncomfortable at
this arrangement; "but it would be better
if you could have explained matters to me
in-doors, where Dame Lucille is."

"She must not know," she replied, hur-
riedly; "that would never do."

"Well," he said, kindly, "tell me as brief-
ly as possible, my good Nanette, what trou-
bles you and how I can assist you."

"How can I make you understand, mon-
sieur?" she said, with downcast eyes. "It
is so hard to begin."

"Very well, then," he said, smiling, "I
shall begin. Is it some little love-affair?"

"Well, monsieur," said the girl, hesitating-
ly, "Milord Douglas has—has asked me to—"

"Milord Douglas," said Eric, becoming
grave at once. "Ah! that is another mat-
ter. You know, of course, how many objec-
tions there are to such a union?"

"I know," she said, in a low voice.

"Being but lately restored to his proper
rank," continued Eric, "it is the more expe-
dient for him to choose a wife in his own
station."

"Oh, monsieur, you are cruel!" said Na-

nette, clasping her hands; "you do not think of me!"

"I do think of you, my poor girl!" said Eric, warmly; "and I tell you you would not be happy in such an alliance!"

A faint gleam of hope entered her heart. Why should he be so averse to the match, unless he had some personal motive for opposing it? Quite unconscious of her thoughts, Eric went on:

"Just as the relatives and friends of Mademoiselle Douglas consider it best for her to marry Viscount Stewart, and so increase the wealth and power of two ancient houses. Take my advice, then, and refuse to marry Viscount Douglas, if you wish to be happy."

"Nanette! Nanette!" cried a hoarse voice from the door, "where are you roaming to at this time of night? Come in, I tell you!"

"They are calling me," cried Nanette, bursting into tears, "and I have not yet heard your advice."

"I will come again," cried Eric, impulsively, completely subdued by her tears. "Shall I say to-morrow morning?"

"As you will," she said, hesitatingly.

"Well, then, to-morrow before noon, if the weather be good; if not, on the following

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morning. Then I will see what I can do for
you."

"You are an angel, monsieur!" said Na-
nette, fervently.

"Far from it, *petite*," he said, laughing;
"very far from it."

He turned away, just as Dame Lucille's
unmusical voice called Nanette again more
lustily than before. When the girl went in,
she was questioned closely.

"Who were you talking to?" cried the
dame, sharply.

At first Nanette would give no answer.
But it was wrung from her that Monsieur
Eric had come down from the château to
see her. The gossips present shook their
heads. Dame Lucille dismissed her with a
sharp cuff on the ear, and Nanette retired to
dream blissful dreams of the morning of sun-
shine that was to bring her lover, beautiful
and noble as the heroes of the fairy tales.

Next morning, when Eric arose and looked
out, it was raining in torrents, pouring in a
straight, steady stream, that gave no prom-
ise of speedy cessation. He was not very
sorry that his second interview with Na-
nette was thus postponed.

"What dreadful weather!" said madame,
as he entered the breakfast-room; "and fan-

cy, this headstrong Robert insists on riding over to the Stewart estate!"

"You will have rough weather, Douglas," said Eric; "had you not better postpone your visit?"

"Such advice from you, Eric!" said Douglas—"you, once the most daring fisher on the coast!"

"Rough weather never troubled us in the old days at Fouls," said Eric, turning at once to Douglas, readily sympathizing with his allusion to the past.

"I should think not," replied Douglas. "But as to my visit, I must really go. I shall wrap up well, though, and defy the weather."

"Do you know, Monsieur Eric," said Hélène, "the oldest tree in the orchard was blown down last night? It has made me sad, for I remember, when I was a very little girl, papa used to take me there and tell me how old it was."

"What a pity it should be destroyed!" said Eric. "I am sure you must be sorry. But was any more damage done?"

"None that we know of," said Douglas; "but if it continues to blow as hard as this, I fear there will be more."

After breakfast he put on his great-coat,

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and, turning up the collar, went out into the storm. After he had driven away, the ladies sat down to their embroidery. Hélène chatted away, her merry laugh ringing through the rooms, her childish face growing bright and animated as she talked. Through the latticed windows of the room they could see the court-yard, with the perennial plants, and the vases, and the sundial. The trees were fairly dripping with rain, the basins of the fountains overflowing, the high stone-wall drenched to a dark, gloomy gray.

After a while the conversation turned on Foula. Eric told them many a strange tale of the island itself, and those immediately in the vicinity, with which from boyhood he had been familiar. He described the hut where Douglas had passed his cheerless youth, with no other companion than the crazy woman. He spoke of his own happy fireside, his mother's tales, which had whiled away the long, dark winter nights in the by-gone years at Foula. The legends and the ballads, the atmosphere of poetry and romance, in which he had been brought up, were not forgotten, and his listeners were entranced. He told them of the home-life on the island; the quaint customs of the simple islanders; the beauty of that north-

ern region, its weird lights, and gleams, and glory; the strange meteors that darted through the sky at night, and, as the islanders said, bore the spirits of the vikings, dead thousands of years, on missions of war and blood through the gloom of midnight. He told them how the moon looked down with tenfold light and glory on the vast unquiet sea, the moss-grown rocks, and the pebbly shore.

"It is a glorious sight when a storm sweeps over it," he said, "stirring it to deadly rage; the waves, rising as high as mountains, lashing themselves against the cold sternness of the rocks, which they cover with foaming whiteness. The sky and sea are dull, leaden-gray, with a line of lurid light beneath the horizon, and a suspicion of dark, dismal wrecks, far out where the storm rages in unchecked fury."

"Is it always gray, and wild, and terrible?" asked Hélène, laying down her work, and fixing her bright, childish eyes upon his face.

"No, mademoiselle," said Eric; "there are times when it is calm, and soft, and fair as a bright, green meadow. The waves come softly in, like waving grass, at the touch of the wind; the sun lights with its gold the

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emerald-green caves, lying cool, and fair, and
limpid beneath the surface, and brings up,
as it were, bright reflections from the hid-
den mines of sparkling jewels lying in its
far depths."

"How beautiful it must be!" said Hélène.
"And think, Monsieur Eric, I have never
seen it! But tell us more of it."

"At evening," continued Eric, "it is like
fairy-land, reminding one of the 'Arabian
Nights' and their enchanted realms. There
are fields of molten gold; there are rivers
of ruby and carbuncle; there are mines of
diamond, emerald, topaz, and sapphire; there
are quarries of gleaming metals: and the
sunset skies above are rich and rare; now
dark and sombre, now clear and bright—
flecks of amber on a gray ground; streaks
of pale green skirting dark purple clouds.
Once I remember it was a lovely afternoon;
the water was bright green, but when the
sun began to set it changed to steel-gray.
The sun went down in a dazzling blaze of
gold, but, as it drew near its watery bed, it
turned to fiery crimson. A flush came over
one portion of the sea, till it gleamed like
the red heart of a ruby; the other half of
the water lay still and cold, and in its sol-
emn grayness sailed a boat, outlined against

the sky. It sailed on and on till it came within the red radiance of the glowing west, and, catching the colors of that enchanted realm, gleamed a fairy bark of mother-of-pearl."

"How exquisitely you describe the scene!" said madame. "It is a treat to hear you talk."

And she was right. He had held them spellbound, so thoroughly was he imbued with the power of his subject; for neither time, nor travel, nor experience could ever eradicate the vein of poetry that lay so deep in Eric's nature. It had come down to him from the occupants of ancestral tombs; it had been inherited from his mother; it was inwoven with his very nature. Hence his face grew grave or mirthful, stern or soft, as the occasion demanded, his mobile features expressing every emotion.

Hélène was happy that morning—happy in a vague, unreasoning way which she could not understand. It was pleasant to sit there, secure from the wind and rain, listening to the voice she had learned to consider the most musical on earth, watching the features of a face dearer and handsomer to her than any face she had ever seen. Utterly unconscious of all this, Eric felt it a

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pleasant task to entertain as best he could
 his kind and hospitable hostess, and the
 charming young girl, whose childish beauty
 and *saixete* he so much admired. But she
 was never farther from him than on that
 morning of rain, when his thoughts were
 back in distant Foula.

Douglas did not return till late that night,
 and Eric consequently did not see him; but
 he thought he heard him pacing his room,
 till he fell asleep himself, and forgot every-
 thing. Next morning was such a one as
 often follows rain—a morning of fresh, brac-
 ing air, and warm sunlight. When Eric
 came down-stairs, he found Douglas stand-
 ing on the hearth with his back to the fire.
 His face was pale, and he had a deep wrinkle
 between his brows.

"Good-morning, Douglas," said Eric, en-
 tering.

"Good-morning," answered Douglas, with
 a sort of constraint.

"Are you not well?" asked Eric.

"Oh yes, well enough," said he. "I am a
 little out of sorts, that's all."

As he spoke he walked over to the table
 and took up a paper, so that nothing more
 passed between them. When breakfast was
 over, Eric went out. As he passed through

the court-yard, Douglas called to him carelessly,

"Off to the village, Eric?"

"Yes," Eric replied; "I am going down to the inn."

"To the inn?" said Douglas.

"Yes; I want to see Nanette."

A cloud gathered on Douglas's face, but he made no further remark. Eric strolled along the wintry roads, enjoying the pleasant air, and when he reached the inn, found Nanette waiting for him as before.

"Let us walk a little way," said Nanette.

"They are watching me, I think."

"Watching you?" said Eric, in surprise.

"Why?"

"Because they discovered that you were here last night."

Eric looked annoyed. However, he gave no sign, but simply said,

"Well, let us lose no time. Tell me what I can do to help you."

She glanced at him. He was looking straight before him, his handsome face flushed by his rapid walk, his closely cut hair blowing a little in the wind, his figure set off to great advantage by his well-fitting morning costume, the perfection of careless ease: one hand was in the pocket of his coat,

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the other holding his cane. Nanette thought
no one could be handsomer in face and fig-
ure than he, and a more competent judge of
manly attractions might well have agreed
with her.

She glanced at him, hesitated, and said, in
a low voice,

"I have asked monsieur's advice. What
must I say to Milord Douglas?"

"Nanette," cried Eric, turning to her im-
petuously, "let your heart prompt you. I
see clearly that this is not a matter for my
interference."

To his astonishment, she burst into tears.

"What does this mean?" asked he.

"Oh, monsieur, I cannot, I do not love
him!"

"You do not?" said Eric; "well, that
makes the matter very simple. Your course
is clear. You would not marry for ambi-
tious motives?"

"No, no!" she said.

Eric was relieved. He would fain see his
friend married to a lady of his own rank.

"Tell me, Nanette," he said, "do you love
any one else?"

She did not answer, but continued weep-
ing.

"What of that handsome peasant,

Jacques, whom Dame Lucille used to say your father intended for you?"

"They persecute me!" she said, with sudden vehemence; "they are cruel to me, because I will not marry him; and oh, I cannot do it!"

"Then there is some other young peasant who has your heart," said Eric. "Well, take courage; your father may relent. But tell me who is the fortunate youth?"

"I cannot," said Nanette; "he is more cruel than all the rest. He would despise me if he knew. I fear he loves some one else."

He looked at her a little curiously: her eyes were fixed upon the ground.

"Why, poor child!" said Eric, smiling involuntarily, "who is the hard-hearted avain?"

"He is a great lord, and lives in a chateau," she said, in a very low voice.

"A lord?" said Eric, starting. "Then you do love the Douglas."

"No," she said, "I do not love Milord Douglas."

"Then it is Stewart," cried Eric. "But you are mad, my poor Nanette; he loves another."

"It is not him," she said, in a hurried voice.

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"Then who—" he began.

He looked at her, and did not finish. Men-
tally he cursed his own stupidity, as he read
her secret in her deep agitation.

"I will not ask who it is," he said, grave-
ly. "Your secret is safest with yourself."

"But it is no longer mine," she said, vehe-
ment. "You know it, and despise me!"

He turned away, and seemed to watch the
shadows of the trees. He was deeply shock-
ed and pained. He said at last,

"You are excited, Nanette, and do not stop
to consider. Let us talk of something else."

"You despise me now!" she burst out
again. "Oh, how mad, how foolish I have
been, and how unmaidenly!"

"Stop, Nanette, I implore you," said Eric;
"you are lowering yourself. The knowl-
edge I have most unwillingly gained will
be forgotten. You have acted childishly,
but henceforth you will be a woman, never
forgetting your own self-respect."

She covered her face with her hands.

"I wish you had spared me the pain of
saying such words to you, Nanette," con-
tinued Eric. "I would rather have cut my
right hand off."

As she seemed overcome, he thought it
better to go.

"You will doubtless prefer to be alone, Nanette," he said; "so I shall bid you good-bye now. You must never think with any regret or pain of to-day, and I shall always be your devoted friend."

Eric pursued his way homeward, leaving Nanette to indulge in a burst of passionate grief. The fact of being admired by the lord of the castle had so turned her silly little head that she had fancied all men were ready to throw themselves at her feet. Hence her bitter disappointment and mortification, and hence her unmaidenly forwardness, for which she was so severely punished.

Eric himself was full of perplexity and of vexation. He knew the busy tongues of the village gossips, and feared the matter might get afloat. Moreover, he was sorry for Nanette; she was so young, so unsophisticated, and had been so carelessly brought up.

Meanwhile, Hélène was out among the alleys of the park, from which the snow had been nearly all washed away by the heavy rain of the previous day. She was warmly wrapped up, and enjoyed to the full the spring-like brightness of the weather. Hence, as soon as her cousin Henri came in sight, she cried out to him, enthusiastically,

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him, enthusiastically,

"Oh, cousin, cousin! is it not a lovely day? Everything is so bright, and fresh, and sweet!"

"Yes, everything, *ma belle*," said Henri, "not excepting the dear little mistress of all these broad lands."

"Hush, Henri!" she said; "do not let us talk of ourselves, when there are so many beautiful things to talk about and admire."

"I know what I admire most," said Henri. "All these things are beautiful in their way, but, *mon ange*, what is equal to a certain charming demoiselle who stands among these frosted trees like the queen of an enchanted domain?"

"Henri," she said, "if you continue, I shall send you into the house to tell your compliments to Mairaine."

"Would you be so cruel," he said, "as to banish me from your presence?"

"You are perverse, cousin," she said. "You flatter because it torments me."

"Where is your friend the Laplander this morning?" he asked.

"Oh, why will you not remember, cousin," said Hélène, indignantly, "he is not a Laplander!"

"Well, *n'importe, mon ange*," said the count, breaking a twig as he spoke from one of the

bushes. "By-the-way, your brother is an uncommon good fellow."

"Oh, Cousin Henri, you like him?" cried Hélène. "Is he not kind, and good, and handsome?"

"All the rest, *mignonne*, but not handsome," said the young man. "The Laplander has certainly all the beauty. But where is he?"

"Gone to the village," said Hélène, a little absently. She was not looking at her cousin then, or she might have observed a malicious smile about his mouth.

"I thought as much," said the count; "his *penchant* for the village is common talk."

"*Penchant* for the village!" said Hélène, opening her eyes wide. "Why, he never speaks of it, and seldom goes there."

"*Eh bien*," said the viscount, shrugging his shoulders. "It is clear, my pretty cousin, he does not tell you his secrets."

"What secrets?" cried Hélène, pettishly. "Cousin, you are so provoking!"

"So you are provoked at the idea of the Laplander having a secret," said the viscount. "Yet it is his own affair, *n'est ce pas, ma petite*?"

"I do not know what you are talking about," said Hélène, a little crossly.

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"Well, a woman will have her way; and, after all, the whole village knows it—that monsieur the Laplander is making a fool of himself over the little maid of the inn."

Hélène felt bewildered. Somehow her cousin's words hurt her.

"*Chacun a son goût*," continued the viscount; "but it would not be mine. What a wife to bring home to his people!"

Hélène felt as if the sunlight and the mild, refreshing air were far more bleak and dreary than yesterday's rain and storm. She tried to speak, but could not.

"You do not like that, *ma belle*," he said. "Every demoiselle thinks each young man her proper prey."

"Cousin," said Marguerite, proudly, "you do not know what you are saying. Monsieur Eric is our guest: I do not want him spoken hardly of, that is all."

"I do not speak hardly of him when I say he loves this village girl," said the viscount, more seriously.

"No, but you jeer at him, and I will not have it: he is my brother's friend," she said.

"Talking of love, *mon ange*," said the viscount, "I know some one desperately in love with yourself, but he finds you so cruel that he dares not speak of it. Seriously,

Hélène, you know I mean myself. What do you say to it?"

"Oh, cousin," she said, very pale and gentle now, "I am so sorry! Oh, I wish I had known!"

He saw she was frightened, so he said,

"Consider it as a jest, *ma petite*: sometime, when you are older, we will speak of it again."

"But no, cousin," she said, earnestly, "I know it is not a jest; and you must never speak of love to me again, even when I am much, much older."

He saw she meant what she said, but was not much alarmed for the ultimate success of his suit. He readily promised not to mention the obnoxious theme, with a very decided mental reservation, though, and bade her good-morning just in time to exchange a salute with Eric, who was coming up the avenue.

After he had gone, Hélène walked slowly toward the house, thinking of what she had heard. Madame, who was at her embroidery in one of the windows, called to her,

"Are you coming in soon, *ma petite*? I want you."

"I am coming at once, *Marraine*," answered Hélène.

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She came in, and madame did not look at
 her closely enough to perceive that a little
 of her usual joyousness was wanting.

"You said you wanted me, Mairaine?"

"Yes; sit down here at my feet," said ma-
 dame. "I have something to say to you."

She did not ask what, and madame began,
 a little nervously,

"Now you must not be alarmed nor vexed
 at what I am about to say, *petite*."

"Why should I be alarmed or vexed, Mar-
 raine?" said Hélène, raising her eyes, and fix-
 ing them on madame's face.

"There is no reason whatever, my dear,"
 said madame, hastily; "but I wanted to tell
 you that perhaps, under the circumstances,
 it would be as well if you were not quite so
 much with Monsieur Eric."

Hélène's eyes flashed, and she drew her-
 self up proudly. What could this mean?
 she thought—the same insinuation that her
 cousin had made.

"Not but that he is a most charming per-
 son," said madame, "but because he is a
 stranger; and as we all hope you will one
 day marry Henri Stewart, we—"

"Mairaine," said Hélène, rising to her feet
 and speaking with sudden passion, "as to
 Monsieur Eric, I do not understand you;

but one thing I do know—I will never marry Henri Stewart; never, never?"

Her face looked so pale, its pretty childishness of expression seemed so utterly gone, and a sort of patient misery to have taken its place, that madame looked at her in wonder and alarm. As she turned to reply, she saw Eric standing on the threshold, uncertain whether to advance or retire.

"Come in, Monsieur Eric," she said, graciously. "Mademoiselle Hélène does not feel well; her head aches."

Eric came in, and addressing Hélène, with an expression of real concern on his face, said,

"Are you suffering, mademoiselle? Is there anything I can do?"

He spoke very kindly, and Hélène felt the kindness. She answered, smiling faintly,

"I am not suffering very much, thank you."

"Sit down in the *fauteuil*, Hélène," said madame, "and I will bathe your head with *eau sedatif*."

"That may relieve you," said Eric; "I trust it will."

Her face, as she raised it to him, looked pitiful somehow, and he felt a compassion deeper than the occasion warranted. Per-

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haps he had heard her passionate words,
and suspected that the cause lay deeper than
in any physical suffering. After a few more
words of sympathy, he retired, and left ma-
dame to soothe her patient as far as lay in
her power.

"Forgive me, Mairaine," she said, raising
her eyes wearily; "I spoke so hastily. But
you know I do not wish to marry for many
years to come; and even then, I think, if you
please, I would rather it should not be Henri."

"Very well, dear, very well," said ma-
dame; "you shall marry whoever you please.
But rest now; you look pale and tired."

"I am tired, Mairaine," she answered.

And madame said no more. She had not
told Hélène that the warning was suggest-
ed by Douglas, who feared Eric's influence
on his sister.

That night Eric had rather a stormy in-
terview with Douglas. The latter came in
late, having spent the afternoon and even-
ing at the Stewart estate, where his cousin
had taken pains to instil all sorts of suspi-
cions against Eric into his mind. He open-
ly charged his friend with having trifled with
Nanette's affections to gratify his own con-
ceit, and then left her to the ridicule of her
friends and companions. Eric justified him-

self as well as he could; but, as he was bound in honor to reveal nothing of what had passed at the interview with Nanette, Douglas did not give much weight to the story. After an animated discussion of the matter, Eric said,

"To put an end to the subject, I may as well tell you that to-morrow morning I shall ask Nanette to marry me."

"To marry you!" cried Douglas, in amazement. "And your parents—what will they say?"

"That I cannot tell," answered Eric; "but I believe I am doing what is right. Nanette is free to accept or reject me, but I shall give her the option."

As he spoke, the bell in the tower struck midnight. Like a flash, the thoughts of both flew back to Calais, the room in the hotel, the clock in the neighboring church. Douglas let his head fall upon the table and almost sobbed.

"O God!" he cried, "would that I, at least, had never seen Touraine!"

"The past is past, my friend," said Eric, laying his hand on Douglas's shoulder. "We cannot alter it. But God help us all!"

As Douglas rose to leave the room, Eric said,

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"Do not think hardly of me, Douglas, by
the memory of our boyhood and youth, and
the friendship since then continued between
us!"

"I will try to think of you as I have al-
ways done," said Douglas, slowly; "and, re-
membering the deep obligations under which
I am to you, will forget the unhappiness you
have caused me."

"And is it in this way we must part,"
said Eric, sadly—"you talking of obliga-
tions as if to a mere stranger? Can we
never be friends again?"

"We shall always be friends," said Doug-
las; but there was a coldness and an eva-
siveness in his voice that Eric did not like.

"Good-bye, then, Douglas," said Eric.

"Good-bye," answered Douglas, parting
thus from the one true friend that life had
given him. Eric spent the night pacing the
room. Again and again recurred to him his
mother's words: "The highest kind of hero-
ism consists in sacrificing one's self for the
good of others." And, pondering thus, the
dreary night passed and the dawn broke.

CHAPTER X.

"Fear not that while around thee
Life's varied blessings pour,
One sigh of hers shall wound thee,
Whose smile thou'lt see no more.
No; dead and cold forever
Let my past love remain;
Once gone, its spirit never
Shall haunt thy rest again.
Think how, asleep or waking,
Thy image haunts me yet;
But how this heart is breaking
For thy own peace forget."

MOORE.

NEXT morning Eric left the house without waiting to see any one. He walked rapidly toward the inn, as one who has a set purpose in view from which he cannot be deterred. When he entered the kitchen, Nanette was sitting, pale and dejected, at her spinning. Her father was smoking, as usual, before the fire. To him Eric at once addressed himself:

"May I have a moment's conversation with your daughter?"

"I believe you have had too many already," said the man, gruffly. "Fine gen-

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tle men like you, stealing away girls' hearts
 from honest men!"

"Spare me your reproaches," said Eric, a
 little impatiently. "I have come to ask
 your consent to our marriage, provided Na-
 nette be willing."

"Your marriage!" said the landlord, chang-
 ing his tone at once. "You do her too much
 honor, monsieur."

"Have I your consent?" said Eric, lacon-
 ically, "and may I see her a moment alone?"

"Certainly, monsieur, certainly," and the
 landlord rose, and left Eric alone with Na-
 nette.

She sat like one in a trance, pale, quiet,
 and motionless. Eric approached her, and
 said, very gently,

"Nanette, you heard my conversation with
 your father. You know why I have come.
 Tell me, then, can it be?"

"You want me for your wife?" she said,
 in a strange, quiet voice.

"Yes," he said; "do you think you could
 be happy?"

"Happy?" she said, her breath catching
 a little in her throat. "Happy? Ah, yes.
 But I understand you are marrying me from
 pity, and because bad-hearted people may
 jeer at my hopeless love."

"Why do you say this, Nanette?" he said, with a great pity in his eyes. "Why do you inflict such needless pain on both of us?"

"And so you are to have all the pain?" she said. "No, no; go back to the one you do love, and be happy."

"You are mistaken, Nanette," he said, quietly. "I do not love any one—in the way you mean, at least; and if I do not love you as much as you deserve, I will try so to act that you will not feel the want of the deeper feeling that time may bring. You love me a little, too, do you not?"

"You know too well that I do," she answered, "and in your heart you despise me."

"Did I not tell you," he said, with patient gentleness, "that the little episode of yesterday morning was forgotten forever? I come to-day, not to recall the child, but to woo the woman."

"But," she said, "you do not know how I plotted, and planned, and made up my mind to ensnare you."

"That, too," he said, "belongs to the past. The woman, I perceive, is anxious to do penance for the little folly of the child. Answer me, Nanette; will you be my wife?"

She did not answer for some time; then she said, simply, "When?"

his, Nanette!" he said, eyes. "Why do you sin on both of us?" "I have all the pain!" "Back to the one you

"Nanette," he said, quietly—any one—in the way and if I do not love you, I will try so to act the want of the deep—may bring. You love not?"

"All that I do," she answered, "heart you despise me." "he said, with patient little episode of yes—forgotten forever! I call the child, but to

"You do not know how I and made up my mind

"belongs to the past. is anxious to do pen- of the child. And you be my wife?" "for some time; then on?"

"To-day our public betrothal must take place. Under present circumstances, I do not wish to remain long at the château. After that ceremony I shall go away for a while, then return to take you with me to my home far over the sea."

She shivered a little, but answered, quietly,

"If it must be to-day, I am willing. At what hour?"

"I shall have to see the curé at once," said Eric; "then I will let you know. And I beg of you, meantime, to try and be happy, and not to consider this matter in the light you do."

"You want me to be happy at your expense," she said, drearily. "And to-day is the betrothal! Very well."

After a few more words, he was going out, when she detained him.

"Have it to-day," she said, with strange eagerness; "do not let it be postponed."

"It shall not be postponed," said Eric, firmly, wondering a little.

He had a slight altercation with the curé's house-keeper, one of those amiable individuals who never gave any information it was in her power to withhold. She admitted, after much discussion, that the curé was at

home, and, after further persuasion, allowed Eric to enter. The curé, recognizing him at once, greeted him very kindly, and listened with the greatest interest to his story. Eric gave him only the merest outlines, but the curé shrewdly suspected there was more in the matter than at first appeared. He advised him to act with great caution; to consider his parents and their probable opinion of such a match, speaking with such fatherly kindness that it brought the tears to Eric's eyes. Still, he said that the betrothal must take place that day, and that it was his special wish it should be made as public as possible. The curé consented to everything when he saw that Eric was determined to carry the matter through. Eric, leaving him, returned to the inn to tell Nannette the hour, then went home to the château.

Madame and Héliène had just finished an unusually late breakfast. They greeted him with laughing inquiries, but he noticed that Héliène was a little more thoughtful than usual.

"It is indeed a lovely day," he said, in answer to a remark of madame's; "and I have every reason to be glad, because it is my betrothal-day."

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"Your betrothal-day!" cried madame.
 "To whom?"

Hélène did not say anything, only listen-
 ed, feeling a strange bewilderment.

"To Nanette, the innkeeper's daughter,"
 he answered, quietly.

"It is a shame!" said madame, vehement-
 ly. "You are infatuated—you are mad!
 What will your father say? and your beauti-
 ful, stately mother, of whom Douglas speaks
 with such reverence?"

A shade of sadness fell over his face.

"I trust they will say I have done well,"
 he answered.

Madame could not be persuaded into
 thinking well of such a marriage. How-
 ever, in the heat of her discourse she was
 called away on some household business.
 When she had gone Eric walked to the
 window, looked out a moment, then turning
 again, said to Hélène,

"You, at least, mademoiselle, will con-
 gratulate me; you have not the prejudice
 of caste."

"Caste cannot be considered where two
 people love each other," she said, quietly.

"Loving her as you do, I congratulate you."

"Thank you," he said, earnestly. "I am
 glad to have your good wishes."

She flushed slightly, the color creeping up her fair girlish throat and into her face. "I hope you will be very happy," she said, earnestly, "and I know you will. Nanette is both pretty and good."

"Yes, she is pretty and good," he said, absently. "But, mademoiselle, I must now say good-bye. I cannot return here after the betrothal."

"No?" she said, asking no further question. "Then it is really good-bye?"

"Really good-bye," he said.

"Shall we see you again in Touraine?" she asked.

"When I return for the wedding," he answered, briefly.

"I forgot," she said; "of course we shall see you then."

"Mademoiselle," he said, turning back from the door, "will you think of me sometimes in your prayers? You are so good and innocent, your prayers must be heard."

"I will pray for you," she said, simply, and he departed.

There was the balminess and freshness of spring in the air that afternoon—its gentle radiance, its mild sunshine, its tender, thrilling joyousness. The church was crowded with villagers, all eager, excited, and curi-

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ness and freshness of afternoon—its gentle ine, its tender, thrill- church was crowded or, excited, and curi-

ous. The Douglas pew contained madame and mademoiselle: Robert was nowhere to be seen. As the young couple passed up the aisle, every one observed that Nanette was deathly pale, and that her eyes shone with a strange lustre. Scarcely a glance was given at Eric, who was quiet, and self contained, and grave. When they reached the altar, the priest put the usual questions to Eric. They were answered promptly and firmly, and the priest turned to Nanette. To their astonishment, she said, so clearly and distinctly that it was heard in the remotest corner of the church:

"I do distinctly and solemnly declare that I will not plight my troth to the gentleman beside me, known in the village as Monsieur Eric. He has most nobly and generously offered to marry me out of pity. I declare before God's altar that I will not accept the sacrifice, and that he is free."

Eric stood bewildered. He was only roused when Nanette fell, fainting. He raised her in his arms most tenderly, and, forgetting everything else, carried her out of the church and to her home. She lay in a long swoon, from which she recovered only to go into another.

Eric remained at the inn till it was quite

late; then, being informed that she seemed a little better, he departed. He had made up his mind to cross the river and find lodgings on the opposite shore. It was a dark night. The moon was gone down, and even the stars were somewhat dim, scarcely relieving the intense darkness. It was very silent on the river-bank, and not a boat to be seen. At last, as he waited anxiously, he saw a solitary bark approaching the shore. The boatman was alone, and Eric hailed him.

"Will you take me across? I am anxious to get over to-night."

The man answered affirmatively in a sort of muffled voice that sent a chill through Eric's heart. However, he jumped into the boat, and they were soon speeding out into the water. Not a sound but the splash of the oars broke the silence. The boatman was so much wrapped up, and the lower part of his face so muffled by the cloak, that Eric could not catch a glimpse of him. On they sped, through the night and through the darkness. At last they heard noises which warned them of the approach of a steamboat. It came on swiftly, and as it passed them Eric caught a glimpse of his companion's face at last. With amazement

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he recognized Douglas. He had not time to speak or give any sign of his discovery. Whether it was the swell of the passing steambot or what, they never knew, but the boat began to fill with water; then it turned rapidly and upset. Eric seized his friend, and by great good-fortune both were enabled to catch a firm hold of the boat. Then followed one fearful moment, full of agonizing suspense, of solemn thought, of lightning-like retrospection, and they saw that the boat could not support them both. It strained and creaked, and in another moment would have snapped; but Eric, quick as thought, cried,

"Keep a firm hold, old fellow! I will take care of myself."

He let go, and as he was swept away in the darkness, Douglas heard, or thought he heard, his voice coming back faintly,

"If I die, let this be reparation!"

But the accident had been seen from the deck of the little steamer. As quick as possible it put back, and succeeded in saving Douglas just as he was becoming exhausted. They searched for Eric, but no trace of him could be found. The Loire flowed on, dark and silent, and the steambot swept toward the shore. Douglas lost consciousness, and

did not revive till he had been brought home to the château. He gave them a brief account of what had occurred, as soon as he was able; but the only comment he made on it was,

"A brave and loyal heart was buried to-night in the Loire; and to save my life! to save my life!"

Hélène was very silent. Her childishness was gone; she seemed more womanly. She cared for Douglas tenderly, making no comments on what had happened, never mentioning Eric's name. She was brave and resigned; accepting his death as a cross indeed, but one which was flower-wreathed. It was such a noble, heroic death to die—a fitting ending to a pure and blameless life! And she felt, somehow, as if he would be as near to her in death as in life. So, the only alteration visible in her face or manner was an increased seriousness, and a greater gentleness and patience. Madame was loud in her grief, especially at first; but Douglas was stricken, bowed to the earth by a weight of suffering. He could not forget that this was the last of all the benefits a brave and gentle heart would confer on him. He thought bitterly enough of the long, devoted friendship which nothing but death

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had power to change. The frank, handsome
face haunted him continually—the violet
eyes and yellow hair.

Meanwhile, at the inn Nanette lay all night
long between life and death. In her deliri-
um she called upon Eric to come and save
her; then she shudderingly repulsed him,
conjuring him to leave her. Douglas, too,
was mixed up in her wild fancies. Toward
dawn she seemed calmer; and as the morn-
ing grew brighter and brighter, and the
wood-lark sang high in the heavens, Na-
nette was asleeping, her long fair hair flow-
ing loose upon the pillow, and her breathing
gentle and natural.

CHAPTER XI.

"Oh, the might of the strength that dwells apart
In the deep, deep cells of a woman's heart !
Little we know it, and man may deem
It is but the tale of an idle dream ;
But there are springs which are never dry,
But flow on in silence exhaustlessly ;
And there are chords which, if once ye sound them,
The heart where they dwell will shiver round them."
From the German.

THE days passed by heavily and drearily ; the whole village seemed to be under a cloud. The tragical fate of the handsome young stranger, who had made himself generally beloved, was universally lamented, and cast a gloom over every one. However, Nanette was slowly recovering ; and, when the long summer days came, was able to sit up even out-of-doors during the warm, sunny hours. The sad news of Eric's death had been kept from her, lest in her weak state it should be too great a shock. She supposed that he had returned to Foula. Sometimes she wondered a little that he had not left any message for her ; not, she argued, that she deserved it, but from her knowledge of

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his uniform kindness and generosity. If ever she repined at his utter neglect, she instantly subdued the feeling. She had been the cause of pain and trouble to him; why should he not try to forget her?

Her chair was carried into the garden, and usually placed against that wall where the sun fell brightest and warmest. She spent hours there, pale and quiet, her eyes a little sad, her face white and wan, her manner serious and subdued. One day, as she sat there, she heard two strangers talking near the open window. Their voices came out to her through the leaves that crept thickly up the wall. They spoke of the handsome young stranger, his noble death, and the debt owed to his memory by the house of Douglas. They were startled by a faint moan. Nanette had fainted. She was confined to bed for a day or two after that; she soon recovered, however, and, a little more weary, but patient, sat in her accustomed place by the wall where the vines clustered green and thick, and the sun shone down longest and brightest. She expressed a firm belief that Eric was still alive; nothing could persuade her to the contrary. She always declared he would one day return to Touraine. More than once Hélène came to

see her, and cheered her with her happy face and pleasant words. Hélène's old joyousness had not entirely deserted her, though none would have now compared her to a bird, unless to one that dreams of the merry greenwood, and the free wild forest, behind the bars of its cage. Yet Hélène looked happy; there was a look of peace and contentment on her face that communicated itself to all who conversed with her. To any one who knew her secret, her present conduct would have been a revelation, showing her character in a new light; she went about her ordinary occupations brightly, courageously, and firmly, never permitting her grief to interfere with whatever came in her way as duties to be fulfilled. Yet the handsome, fearless face, and the lithe, manly figure were seldom absent from her thoughts. At night, particularly, they haunted her, breaking in upon her sleep, and taking a variety of forms and shapes to her troubled mind. In one way, above all, she never forgot him, and that was in prayer. She remembered how he had asked her for prayers at their parting, and held his request as sacred.

Hélène's visits did Nanette good. She, of course, knew nothing of the demoiselle's se-

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cret, nor what a bond of union existed be-
tween them; but she knew that Hélène was
good, and pure, and sweet, that her nature
was both wholesome and sympathetic, and,
while she respected, she loved her.

One afternoon Nanette was in her usual
place by the wall, watching the leaves rus-
tling, and the trees making shadows on the
garden walk, and playing among the grasses.
The deep-hued hearts of the flowers were
wafting their burdens of fragrance out upon
the summer air; the thrush, and the linnet,
and all the woodland birds were twittering
in joyous little cadences among the foliage,
and Nanette felt very calm and peaceful.
She had been praying—a calm, hopeful
prayer—and when that was ended had fall-
en into a quiet dreaminess. Her eyes were
fixed out far beyond the garden wall, where,
dimly and in the blue distance, the Loire
could be seen flowing on its ceaseless way.
She heard a step on the walk, but did not
turn her head, supposing that Lucille was
coming to take her from the serene beauty
of the summer's day. Seeking to catch the
last glimpses of it and drink in its tender
sweetness, she started only when a voice said,
near her,

"Nanette, do you turn away from me?"

"From you, milord," said she, quietly, turning and seeing the Douglas: "no; why should I turn from you?"

"Do you not feel that a noble life has paid the forfeit of my worthless one?"

"Not worthless—oh, not worthless!" she said: "precious, very precious to loving hearts. But, milord, he is not dead. He will return."

"Not dead!" cried Douglas. "Why, have you heard?"

"I have heard only my heart," she said, "and that tells me he is still alive."

"Are you growing stronger, Nanette?" asked Douglas, changing the subject abruptly, for he wished to leave this blessed hope to cheer the girl's sad heart.

"A little stronger," she answered; "this beautiful weather revives me."

"You will soon be quite well," he said, anxiously.

"If it is God's will, I hope so," she answered, quietly. "I am too great a care to the old people."

After a little silence, filled only by the sweet sounds of summer, Nanette said,

"These beautiful days make me happy."

"Happy?" said Douglas; "are you really happy?"

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"I am content," she answered, smiling.
He saw her meaning, and said nothing for
some time. He began again rather abruptly.

"Nanette," said he, "I do not want to
trouble or disturb you; but I would like
once more to offer you a love that has never
been divided, nor never will."

She turned and looked at him wonder-
ingly.

"You love me still?" she said.

"I love you, so that my one joy in life
would be to make you happy," he answer-
ed, firmly. "Perhaps it is selfish of me to
speak of it, yet I did dream that you might
sometime consent to become my wife, and
allow me to care for you."

She shivered a little. It hurt her that
any one should speak to her of marriage.
But she answered, in a low, subdued voice,

"A heart's love is very sweet; but it is
better that I should not be your wife. I
cannot accept so much, where I can give so
little. By-and-by you will see this."

He was about to protest, but, looking at
her, he restrained himself.

"You know best, Nanette," he said, with
no shade of coldness or vexation; "but re-
member that my love is waiting for you if
ever you need it."

He rose to go.

"Good-bye, Nanette," he said.

"Good-bye, milord," she said. "If a poor girl's gratitude is worth anything, you will always have it—that and her prayers."

She watched him pass out the garden gate, and thought rather sadly of that chill evening when he had come from the cold, wintry dusk into the warmth of the inn parlor, accompanied by the friend who had passed so suddenly out of all their lives. The sun was becoming shadowed, the birds were singing afar off in the forest now, and the sky began to show streaks of dark purple down in the glowing west. Nanette, busy with thoughts of her old love, took no heed of these signs of approaching twilight, till Lucille came to bring her in before the chill of evening should fall upon the earth.

It was soon after this that Douglas came in, one evening, with strange news, which struck madame and mademoiselle with a sort of bewilderment. Eric was not dead. He was in the cottage of some fishermen, on the other side of the Loire, and just recovering from a long and severe illness. When Hélène heard this she gave way for the first time. Her wonderful self-control vanished in an instant, and, in the brief hour of com-

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plete abandonment that followed, her brother read her secret, and pitied her.

Soon after dawn on the following morning, Douglas hastened across the Loire to his friend. Their meeting, as might be expected, was most joyful. Eric told his friend how, swimming till he was nearly exhausted, he had been borne along by the tide, and finally dashed against a hard substance. Feeling with his hands, he discovered that it was a little skiff, or fishing-boat, at anchor out in the stream. By a violent effort he succeeded in getting into it; then he became unconscious, and knew nothing more till he found himself in the hut of the fisherman who had discovered him at dawn. He was just recovering from a long and wasting fever, which had left him weak and much emaciated. He asked questions about every one at the château and in the village. Last of all he said,

"And how is Nanette?"

"She has been, like yourself, very ill," said Douglas. "No one ventured to tell her of your accident, till she overheard some strangers discussing it. She has never ceased to express a belief that you were alive. Strange, is it not?"

"Strange indeed," said Eric, musingly.

"She is a noble girl, Douglas—the stuff of which heroines are made. I tell you, my friend, I regard her with reverence."

"I wish you could add, with love," said Douglas, and then stopped.

Eric only shook his head and sighed.

"Poor Nanette!" said Douglas, softly.

By this time it was bright morning: the sun was high in the heavens, and Douglas took his leave. Thenceforth, till Eric was able to be removed to the château, Douglas visited him night and morning. Before long, however, he was again installed in his old apartments at the château, where he was cared for with all possible kindness and tenderness. He found Hélène changed. She was no longer the child who, like a beautiful humming-bird, flitted from flower to flower through long days of sunshine; yet she seemed to be very, very happy, and was just as full of the old sprightliness and gaiety, which had charmed him. Her piquant speeches were a continual source of pleasure and amusement to him, especially during his convalescence.

As soon as he was able, he went down to see Nanette. She was sitting, as usual, in the sunshine, busied with some knitting. Such light work was all she was able for

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now. She received him very quietly, al-
most sadly. When he had made many in-
quiries, full of the warmest concern for her
health, he said,

“Why did you inflict such pain on your-
self and on me that day of our betrothal?”

“Did it pain you?” she said, wistfully.
“I did not know, I did not think of that. I
wanted every one to know how good and
generous you were, that was all; though I
thought, too”—here she hesitated, her pale
face flushing a little—“that you might not
despise me so much.”

“Despise you?” he said; “oh, never, Na-
nette, truest and best of women!”

“How good you are!” she said, “and how
generously you treated my folly! But all
that is gone now. I do not think I shall
live very long; but I hope it will be to hear
of you as happy in the love of some true,
gentle heart.”

They both looked out into the calm si-
lence of the summer day, till Nanette again
spoke.

“I knew you were not dead,” she said, in
a low, hushed voice. “I knew that the dark
waters had never shut you out from those
that love you.”

“It was strange, was it not,” said he,

"that you alone should have had this belief?"

"No, I do not think it was strange," she answered. "It seems natural enough to me."

When he rose to take his leave, Nanette said, in the same hushed voice that had become habitual to her,

"I want to bid you good-bye now."

"But I will see you again," he said; "oh, surely I will see you again!"

"It is better not," she said; "bid me good-bye to-day. Think of me as of one who has passed out of your life forever. Think of me as peaceful and content, having only a little while to wait before suffering will be at an end."

"But oh, Nanette, why can I not come once more?" he said, almost imploringly.

"By the memory of the past, do not come," she said. "I want to make the sacrifice now."

Their parting was solemn, like those partings beside flower-wreathed coffins, where pale, still faces mock us with a semblance of life, and yet have no further hope, nor joy, nor interest, that blends with ours.

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CHAPTER XII.

"And look a while upon a picture.
'Tis of a lady in her earliest youth,
The very last of her illustrious race.
Her face, so lovely, yet so arch, is full of mirth,
The overflowings of an innocent heart.
Just as she looks there in her bridal dress,
She is, all gentleness, all gayety,
Her pranks the favorite theme of every tongue.
But now the day was come—the day, the hour;
Now, frowning, smiling, for the hundredth time,
Her ancient lady mentor preached decorum;
And in the lustre of her youth she gave
Her hand, with her heart in it, to him she loved."

ROBERT.

DURING the lovely days that followed,
the young people at the château made many
excursions to places in the vicinity. Some-
times they strayed away, and spent long,
exquisite afternoons in quiet forest nooks,
gathering the scarlet leaves or late autumn
flowers. The forests, no longer cold and
dark in their green gloom, like the vault-
ed halls of the dead, were warm and mel-
low with a rich, deep glow, like mighty ca-
thedrals, through whose painted windows

streamed the sun in myriad colors. What brush of painter or what pen of poet can catch the golden glory of a forest scene in the autumn? The colors blend into an indescribable harmony, and the foliage seems to consume itself in filling the human heart with a last deep sense of the beauty of nature, and, like the swan, whose death-song is the sweetest, lends to its waning hours a radiance the rarest and most enthralling.

The young people lingered all the long day, as we have said, in woodland places, where the birds sang blithely, hieing to and fro among the many-tinted boughs, and building their little nests on the sturdy arms of the forest monarchs. The early evenings were often spent upon the Loire; and as they drifted down the stream, Hélène told them many a pretty legend connected with the country round, and told in awe-stricken voices by the peasants, generation after generation, beside their peat-fires in the long winter. With her the young men watched the stars come out, night after night, a royal diadem for the sleeping earth; and with her they travelled, in fancy, to the unexplored countries of the starry kingdoms. When the moon shone out, and silvered the dull stream down which

myriad colors. What that pen of poet can say of a forest scene in colors blend into an in- and the foliage seems filling the human heart of the beauty of nature, whose death-song to its waning hours and most enthralling.

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With her the young ars come out, night af- adem for the sleeping they travelled, in fau- d countries of the star- n the moon shone out, ill stream down which

they drifted, no word was said, and the stillness only broken by Hélène humming some sweet strains she had caught from rustic ballads.

But this peaceful life could not go on forever. Eric felt that he must soon return to Foula, yet he dreaded to awaken from the dream-like sweetness of the present. One day he was pacing restlessly up and down the court-yard, thinking over the matter, when Hélène appeared at the door, and, seeing him, came smiling down the steps. She stopped beside the sundial, and began to pull aside the weeds that were beginning to obscure it.

"Poor, neglected old dial!" she said; "no one ever takes any notice of you. See, Monsieur Eric, it is quite overgrown with these parasites."

He advanced to where she stood; but, without giving him time to answer, she went on,

"What a strange mission it has!"

"In what way do you mean?" asked Eric.

"Why, it has only to count the sunbeams all day long; but then it has to wait through the long, dreary night for the sun's returning."

"Its lot is not so different from our own,"

said Eric, half laughing, half sighing. "I have been counting sunbeams, and now I must expect the night."

"Expect the night?" repeated Hélène, looking inquiringly at him.

"I mean that I must soon leave Tonrairie," he explained. "I have lingered too long in its sunbeams."

"Must you really go?" she asked, regretfully.

"I cannot quite forget Foula," he said, laughing a little, "though I have been sorely tempted so to do."

"Will you never, never come back to France?" she asked, wistfully.

"Do not ask me," he said. "If it were possible, I should remain here forever: as that is not possible, I would return from the very ends of the earth, if I could hope—"

He broke off suddenly, and Hélène looked at him in surprise.

"You do not see what I mean," he said, "and it is as well. After all, it is better for me to go and forget."

"Forget what?" she asked, smiling. "May I guess?"

"It would not be very hard, I fear," he answered.

"That good Nanette," she said, mischiev-

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ously, though in her heart there was pain
enough to punish her for the little malice—
"that good Nanette is cruel and perverse,
and, in sacrificing herself, sacrifices poor
Monsieur Eric too."

He smiled, in spite of himself.

"A certain demoiselle makes very bad
guesses," he said; "and after such a very
poor attempt, I am in doubt whether I ought
not to give you the key to the enigma. Per-
haps, mademoiselle, you would then see who
is inclined to be cruel and perverse. Shall
I begin?"

"No, I am content," she said, laughing,
but the color came into her face notwith-
standing.

"So you are not interested in the enig-
ma?" he said, somewhat gravely. "Alas for
the sundial!"

"But the sun shines elsewhere as brightly
as in Touraine," she said, raising her frank,
fearless eyes to his face.

"And are the smiles of demoiselles which
constitute my sunshine as sweet elsewhere?"

"Oh yes," she said; "they are sweet ev-
erywhere."

"But not for me," said Eric, more warmly.

"The smiles I covet belong to Touraine, to
an old château, and— Shall I go on?"

She shook her head and laughed.

"Do you not see that I am in earnest?" he began, growing warmer and more interested, as she seemed to make light of the matter. "It may be sport to you, mademoiselle, but it is pain to me. As I have begun, I shall continue, until I have convinced you, against your will, that my life away from you would be as aimless and dreary as a dial placed where the sun could never reach it."

The color came; warm and soft, into her face. She said, keeping her eyes fixed upon the dial,

"And Nanette?"

"Ah! why will you ask?" cried Eric. "You know I never loved her, nor even fancied I did. Still, I never suspected that I loved you till the night I came so near death. Your face then rose out of the dark waters to me, and I realized how bitter it was to part from you forever. For the first time I knew what love was, but I did not dare to hope that you would leave your home in sunny France to cross the seas and share my home at Foula. I could not risk it."

"And so you believed," said Hélène, a little hesitatingly, "that if I really loved, I should be unwilling to make a sacrifice for

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love's sake. You had not a high opinion of
 me, Monsieur Eric."

"But how could I know, how could I vent-
 ure to hope, that you would regard me with
 favor?"

"And yet a demoiselle's favor is always
 uncertain," said Hélène, shyly. "You did
 not run greater risk than any of your sex
 under such circumstances. But I am right;
 you thought I was childish and frivolous."

"I know not what I thought," said Eric,
 desperately. "I only knew that I feared to
 lose a cherished hope in one cruel moment.
 I have been hasty; forget my folly, unless—"

He looked at her, and her frank gaze
 drooped.

"Unless the dial might be so blessed as
 to remain in the sunshine forever."

She smiled a little, but began to go up
 the steps without answering. At the top
 she paused.

"The sun loves to bring gladness," she
 said, "and the dial must remember that it
 never willingly causes sadness."

"Give the poor dial one hope, then," said
 Eric, advancing eagerly to the foot of the
 steps. "Can a love, true, constant, and de-
 voted, ever hope for a return?"

"True love need never despair," said Hé-

lène, shyly, disappearing through the door, blushing prettily.

Thus was the wooing begun: it lasted for many days; it had all the freshness, and poetry, and brightness of "life's early morning." Hélène was sweet and frank, but shy and somewhat uncertain. Eric found much difficulty in winning a confession of love from her. She had a certain girlish pride, and, with all her pretty *naiete*, was not easily won. But this very reserve pleased Eric; her maidenly dignity charmed him; each day he found some new grace in her, and a fresh impetus to his task of winning the proud little heart. When she did yield it to him, it was graciously and sweetly, as became a high-born damsel, the last of a noble line. She plighted her troth to him in the Haunted Tower. It was an exquisite afternoon; the room was filled with the shadows of the creeping plants, the growth of centuries, upon those walls, within which many a bride had been wooed and won. The trees, in their beautiful autumn garments, waved and nodded friendly greetings through the loop-holes of the tower to the youthful pair. Hélène was glad that her faith should be plighted where, according to an old tradition, many maidens of her race had plighted

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theirs; and the legend ran that vows made there were never broken.

Madame and the Douglas gave their consent most joyfully, as might have been expected, and it was arranged that the wedding should take place one month from the day of betrothal; for Eric began to feel that the hearts in his native island must be grieved at his long delay, and that at their time of life, when hopes and pleasures were few, it was cruel to keep them in expectation.

Shortly after Hélène had given her promise, Viscount Stewart rode over to the castle one afternoon. He found Hélène sitting with madame in their usual place, at a window of the morning-room. After some general conversation, he contrived, with his customary nonchalance, to draw Hélène over to the other window, where he could converse with her more at ease. Madame, troubling herself no farther about them, took up a book, and soon forgot their presence.

"The Laplander has been acting quite a romance," said the viscount, sneeringly. "His affair with that village girl placed him in the light of a *preux chevalier*; and then his drowning—"

"Do not trouble yourself to complete the

list," interrupted Hélène; "the whole village is ringing with Monsieur Eric's praise."

"And doubtless, *ma belle cousine* swells the chorus," said Stewart, shrugging his shoulders. "*Mais qu'importe*, demoiselles will have heroes and exalt them *jusqu'aux cieux*. But, *mon ange*, I have not come here to argue about Laplanders, or other *Bohémiens* from the world's end."

Hélène was pale with anger. The viscount, quite unconscious of having provoked her resentment to such a degree, continued,

"You know it was always understood that you were to be my wife; and I wear to you, *belle ange de ma vie*, that you will have a husband who adores you."

"So I trust," said Hélène, trying to speak calmly; "but it will never be you."

"Who, then?" cried he, quickly, "unless it be a *Bohémien*, a nameless adventurer, whose love you share with a peasant-girl."

"Cousin Henri," said Hélène, drawing her childish figure to its full height, the Douglas blood flushing her cheeks, "I will not say anything of the manifest *grossièreté* of your remark; but, in future, when you wish to express yourself so to a lady, take care to let the subject of your remarks be other than her betrothed husband."

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He stood like one in a trance. Disap-
pointment, rage, jealousy, were all at work
within him; yet as Hélène swept laugh-
tily past him, he held out his hands to her
in mute appeal for forgiveness. That af-
ternoon, before he left the château, he found
courage to speak to her again.

"I have behaved like a *bête*," he said, hur-
bly; "but oh, *ma mignonne*, it was jealousy!
I always knew how it would be, and that I,
in spite of my long, devoted love, would be
thrown aside for a stranger. Forgive me,
though, now, and I will never offend again."

"Nor call Monsieur Eric a Laplauder!"
she said, smiling a gracious forgiveness, and
holding out both her hands to him.

"Ah, cousin," he said, half sadly, "this
Monsieur Eric is a happy man to possess
that generous little heart, always ready to
forgive. But those bright eyes have a great
deal to answer for; and I, their victim,
must be, *hélas!* only a cousin."

"And a good friend, I hope," she said,
"even when I am gone far over the sea."

The time before the wedding passed very
rapidly. Hélène flitted about as happy and
joyous as ever, but was seen much more
frequently entering the little chapel, where
she spent many a half-hour in prayer and

meditation. Madame often looked upon her fondly, sighing to think how short a time her blithe presence would brighten the dark ancestral halls, and lend its fresh youth to cheer the stately old château. She looked forward sadly to a time when visitors would be shown the last portrait in the picture-gallery, and told that it represented the daughter of the house, who had married and gone over the sea to an ocean-bound island; and she could fancy how the stranger, gazing upon it, would envy the home to which so gracious a presence would be added, and try to imagine the high-born damsel a youthful bride, rejoicing her husband's heart in a Northern home, far from the sunny Loire.

The wedding-day came at last—a day in the late autumn, when the earth was arrayed in its fairest robes to celebrate its espousals with death. There was a more touching loveliness in the landscape than the full glory of the midsummer. The village bells rang out in joy; the children strewed their garlands, woven of the dying year's half-faded flowers, under the feet of the bridegroom and the bride. Never had the Douglas halls witnessed a more joyous festivity. The chapel doors were thrown wide, incense

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floated out to the halls and corridors and
through the wide-open lattices, to mingle
with the fragrant air of the October after-
noon. The music sounded sweet and sol-
emn; and the bell of the great tower pealed
out its deep-toned melody.

Nanette was present at the bridal. She
still looked wan and wasted; her hair was
brushed back softly under her peasant's
cap; her dress was plain and quiet; she
seemed content, and even happy. She was
in the hall when the bride was departing.
Hélène stopped and smiled upon her.

"May I kiss you, Nanette?" she said.

As she spoke, she stooped and embraced
her; then Nanette said,

"May the good God give you every joy,
to you and yours!"

Tears were falling from Hélène's eyes
when she turned away. To Eric, Nanette
said, with a smile,

"Why does the lady weep? It makes
me happy to see her your bride. She will
go with you to distant Foula."

She had caught the name, and long after
the carriage had driven away she repeated
to herself,

"Far over the sea, to distant Foula."

Yes, thither they had gone to that dreamy

and mystical land by the sea, where its mystery and its loveliness are for evermore a joy and a delight to the earth; where the ambient air is full of beauty and witchery; where the twilights and dawns are of rare, unearthly loveliness, and the green earth lies like one in an enchanted sleep, dreaming of sea-caves, and jewelled mines, and costly argosies.

One beautiful, clear evening in the Indian summer they arrived at Foula. The Udaller's home still stood, as of old, a beacon of warmth and comfort to the tired travellers. Around the door had collected a number of villagers to greet their young master. Many of them he had left as children, now grown to manhood; others had become bowed and hoary since he was there; new tombstones, too, had been put up in the little churchyard, bearing the names of some who would have been among the first to welcome him home. The throng outside the door waited eagerly for his coming, and, forgetting the decket of years, expected to see him still a handsome youth, proud, self-willed, and daring—the same who had ruled them with an impetuous sway, half of love and half of fear. They remembered his old air of command, his fearlessness, his daring, his outbursts of

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passion. When the carriage stopped, a quiet, self-contained, still handsome man of thirty-five stepped out, who first assisted a veiled lady to alight; then, raising his hat, returned their noisy greeting, kindly, courteously, but calmly.

Upon the threshold of the Udaller's home stood the parents, both silver-haired and venerable. To a lady, tall, erect, and stately, Eric spoke:

"Mother, this is Hélène."

Then Hélène was folded to her heart. But when she had held her there a moment, the mother turned to Eric.

"Son of my heart," she said, clasping him in her arms, "here there is warm welcome for you and for the bride of your love. Welcome, welcome, to the home of your forefathers!"

The Udaller, on whom age was beginning to tell, received them with the most effusive cordiality. Hélène was charmed. She felt like one in a dream when seated by the broad hearth she had learned from Eric to know and love. She felt as if life could give her nothing more than this home in Foula, surrounded by hearts she loved.

And so the heir of the Udallers returned to the home of his ancestors, on the rocky

isle far off in the midst of the ocean, where a new life began for him—a life of joy and content. Many an afternoon did the young lovers wander down among the rocks, close by the wonderful sea, the fairy-land of mysteries, into which Hélène was being initiated; and many a winter evening did they pass beside the fireside, of which in other days Eric had told her.

Many months after, they heard of Nannette's death. She had died peacefully one summer afternoon, with the words of an old hymn upon her lips. All day long before her death she had been heard to murmur blessings on hearts she loved in distant Foula.

Time passed on, and Douglas never married. He lived at the old château with madame, who was passing peacefully into the vale of years. At evening, Douglas was always seen to enter the church-yard. A quiet, flower-grown grave lay near the sunniest wall, and there he spent the twilight hour. He made himself much beloved by the people of the place for his many acts of unselfish benevolence; but he seldom smiled, though the years grew apace, and the children that had woven his sister's bridal garlands were men and women, and the silver began to show in his dark hair.

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Once he went to Foula, and seemed to grow young again, wandering with Eric among the old scenes, full of the freshness and sweetness of life's early morning. They would have persuaded him to remain; but they saw that his heart was buried in a grave, now old and moss-covered, in far-off Touraine, and that he would fain be back, keeping his lonely post, and waiting till the village sexton should one day make a grave for him beside Nanette, near where the Loire goes winding on its solemn, ceaseless way, and far from the once-loved sea at distant Foula. In the picture-gallery of the château hung another portrait, bearing the inscription, "Robert, Viscount Douglas," to which, years afterward, was added, "Last of the Name." Strangers' eyes grow dim when, passing before it, they heard the tale of a romantic love, long after he had passed away to rest, and the old château had fallen into other hands. Admiring glances, too, were cast upon the portrait of a girl, winsome, and joyous, and bright, but of whom the family records said simply, "Married and gone beyond the seas."

And thus did the years fly by; and the château by the Loire became lonely and deserted, the pictures in the gallery were cov-

ered with dust, the tower began to show signs of a speedy decay, and all but a small portion of the house fell into disuse. But far away, in a happy, blithesome home, lived and died the last of a grand old race, winning the love of many a heart beside the sea at Foula.

THE END.